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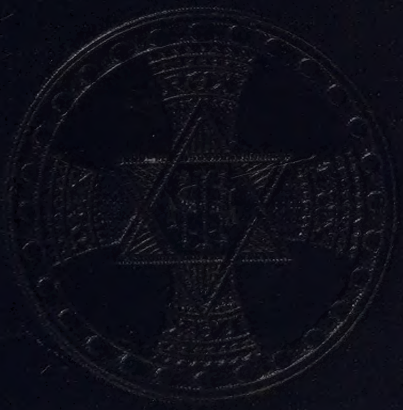

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Handbooks of Catholic Faith and Practice

EDITED BY W. J. SPARROW SIMPSON, D.D.

MODERNISM AND THE PERSON OF CHRIST

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MODERNISM AND THE PERSON OF CHRIST

CHAPTER I

SOME MODERNIST PRESUPPOSITIONS

IT is natural to suggest that if Modernism is to be discussed it should first of all be defined. For every one is aware of the confusions which arise from lack of definition. The need of definition is proverbial, but so also is the difficulty. There are subjects which readily lend themselves to definition and subjects which do not. Modernism is of the latter kind. It is not at all an easy thing to define what Modernism is. The term arose as a description of liberal theology in the Roman Church. But it is commonly extended to include all broad Church theology of the present day.

It may be safely said that Modernism is an attempt to harmonize traditional doctrine with theories of the century. It is a tendency rather than a formulated result. It is therefore distinctly individual. Its positive affirmations are not corporate beliefs but individual opinions. The reader of Modernist books is well aware that he can never take for granted that the conclusions of one member of the School will be identical with those of another, even on doctrines of deep significance. If, then, we criticize any statements of the Modernist type, it must always be distinctly understood that they are quoted as the opinions of

an individual; that their author alone must be held responsible for them; that other Modernists are not at all necessarily committed to them; and that quite likely some at least would qualify them, or reserve judgment, or repudiate what the individual author says.

It is natural that Anglicans should be chiefly concerned with Modernism as it exists in the English Church. But at the same time it is difficult to confine our attention to Anglican instances, were it only for the reason that the same tendencies exist elsewhere in a more developed state, and that English Modernism is not a native product but is derived from France and Germany. A steady stream of Modernist literature, chiefly derived from German sources, has poured into England in translations for the last half-century and more; so that its principles have long been easily accessible to English readers. Much also that is untranslated is quite familiar to students. And it is certainly true to say that Modernism of the English type presents few marks of originality. Nearly all of it can be found in German writers. It is therefore almost inevitable to keep German Modernism in view, while mainly interested in the forms of it which are being commended to the members of the English Church.

If we are to consider Modernism in England at all, it is impossible to ignore one of its clearest and ablest expositions, namely that given in the Girton Conference of 1921. It would be unreasonable to pass that exposition by on the pretext that its form was ephemeral and its contents already obsolete. For its circulation was exceptional. It attracted an attention seldom given to publications of the kind, and obsolete is precisely what its principal assertions are not. It is the most characteristic manifesto issued by the Liberal School in England. It includes a group of very distinguished writers, and being the product of various

independent minds, each of whom is responsible merely for his own contribution and not for those of other people, we get, as might be expected, considerable variety of opinion, different degrees of caution or confidence, much that we can welcome as well as much with which we are compelled to disagree.

But while the Girton Conference is a collection of individual utterances, it is also on the whole the product of a common tendency. It represents a particular School. Broadly speaking, they are what is known as "Modern Churchmen." They permitted themselves to be represented, edited, summed up, by one writer, who is probably as advanced as any liberal thinker among them, and whose representation of their opinions they have apparently nowhere disowned. Various articles which have since appeared in the Hibbert Journal seem to support this view. I have ventured therefore to describe them as "Modernists," because this title represents their general tendency, applicable no doubt to some writers more, and to others less, but distinctly applicable to the principles conspicuously asserted by some.

The special subject on which our attention is to be fixed is Modernism and the Person of Christ. Traditionalism is that conception of Christ which maintains that His personality is not human but literally Divine; that Incarnation means the entrance of Deity into human conditions and human experiences; that Jesus Christ is equal to the Father as touching His Godhead; and that there are eternally distinctions within the being of Deity.

Modernism, on the contrary, maintains that the personality of Jesus is human and not divine, although, in a sense, on the ground of His moral excellence, He may be called Divine; that Incarnation does not mean the entrance of Deity into human conditions and human experience, but the inspiration of a man by the

infusion of Divine gifts; and that if Jesus Christ is said to be equal to the Father, this must be understood of His moral character and not of essential being.

And now let us repeat the caution already expressed. I am far from saying that every Modernist holds to the entire contents of this Modernist view. There are degrees and variations between members of the liberal school of theology with regard to the Person of Christ, as there are in other doctrines also. But what concerns us is those who reject the Traditionalist belief and adhere to Modernism as here explained.

In the *Report of the Cambridge Conference of Modern Churchmen* there is an article entitled, "Jesus: Human and Divine." Let me try to summarize its contents. The writer says: "We know that He was human, we believe that He was also divine." [1] The question then is, In what sense is Jesus divine? We are told that "We must absolutely jettison the traditional doctrine that His personality was not human but divine." "There is for us no such thing as human nature apart from human personality."

The self-consciousness of Jesus was unique because "He was the first man to know God as He really is." [2] But this consciousness of self is not other than human. "I do not for a moment suppose," says the writer, "that Jesus ever thought of Himself as God." This reading of the facts is said to have "won fairly wide recognition among students who are no longer hypnotized by orthodox presuppositions." [3] The writer here frankly owns that he himself formerly accepted a theory of God's self-limitation in Jesus which he now abandons as hopeless. He now holds that instead of regarding God and man as separated, we must regard them as "indissolubly interrelated." "The Creator is not separated from His creatures: they do not exist

[1] P. 288. [2] P. 291. [3] P. 291.

apart from Him." [1] Nay, more, "they are as necessary to the existence of God as He is to theirs. Neither is complete without the other." We are not to "treat God and man as two distinct real existences, each with its own special characteristics, which are incapable of being blended or fused into one." [2] Also "the personal pre-existence of our Lord . . . has no obvious relevance to knowledge and thought to-day." [3] What the writer calls "early Christian religiosity" did indeed naturally and almost inevitably infer the pre-existence of Jesus. And the religious value of that idea is acknowledged by the writer to be considerable. In very penetrating words he owns that "nothing can ever more convincingly commend to us the conception of God as love than this picture of Father and Son alike and together agreeing in the great redeeming purpose and action." [4] But he adds that "it is difficult to translate this picture into scientific theology without becoming tri-theistic." Accordingly the pre-existence of our Lord is entirely set aside. What, then, does the writer mean by Incarnation and the Godhead of Jesus? His answer is: "What my faith in the Godhead of Jesus means to me is that I believe that in getting to know Him, I get to know God: that what He does for me, the at-one-ment of which He makes me conscious, is a divine work." [5] "Never does He cease to be man for me. . . . Yet what I learn from Him is God as well as man. He becomes for me merged, as it were, in God, or identical with God." [6]

But the writer frankly admits that this is Modernism and not orthodoxy. "I am conscious," he writes, "that my categories of thought are not the same as those . . . of Nicea . . . or of any ecclesiastical definition down to the present day." [7]

[1] P. 292. [2] P. 293. [3] P. 297.
[4] P. 297. [5] P. 299. [6] P. 300.
[7] *Ibid.*

Then he adds a remarkable sentence: "It is not from anything that I know beforehand about God that I infer that Jesus is God incarnate. I know almost nothing about God's character apart from Jesus. But I attribute to God the character of Jesus. I say my conception of God is formed by my conception of Jesus. The God I recognize is a supreme 'person,' like Jesus in all that makes personality. In thinking of God personally as Jesus did and as we do, I believe that I am, at all events, thinking along the lines of truth, in the right direction. So Jesus is the creator of my God." [1]

The principal propositions maintained in these extracts are:

1. That God and man are not two distinct real existences.

2. That the personality of Jesus was human and not divine; that He never thought of Himself as being God, and that He did not pre-exist.

3. That, in spite of these theories, which the writer acknowledges to be Modernism and not orthodoxy, we may still speak of Christ's Godhead and His Incarnation.

4. That the traditional belief is a product of early Christian religiosity, and that its adherents are hypnotized by orthodox presuppositions.

5. And, finally, that the writer knows almost nothing of God's character apart from Jesus.

No one can deny that these propositions are important. They invite attention; nay more, they demand it. For they deal with the most fundamental doctrines of Theology, and with the most vital interests of Religion. They cover an enormous field. They require separate and careful treatment. They challenge the grounds of our belief in the Deity of Christ. They compel us to consider the self-consciousness of Jesus, and in what senses He called Himself the Son of God.

[1] P. 301.

They require us to analyse the Apostolic Christology, and the doctrine of the Catholic Church.

But before we consider these it seems advisable, by way of introduction, to consider the general tendencies and assumptions which underlie the particular propositions. For, undoubtedly, much depends on the attitude which we adopt, and on the opinions with which we approach the study of the Person of Christ.

I

As an example, consider the opinion that belief in the pre-existence of Christ is due to "early Christian religiosity." Religiosity means a tendency on the part of believers to ascribe objective reality to their subjective imaginations. Religiosity may be due to temperament, which causes men to project their dreams and fancies into the realm of external fact. Or it may be due to the atmosphere in which the individual lives, to the traditional theories and accepted principles of his time. Religiosity does undoubtedly represent a psychological fact.

But there is a good deal to be considered before it is accepted as an explanation of primitive belief in the pre-existence of our Lord. For there is no religious belief to which that explanation might not be applied. For example, the distinguished critic Höffding describes belief in personal immortality as "egotistical religiosity," since individual survival of death is, in his opinion, a mere creation of exaggerated self-esteem. Similarly, belief in salvation is discredited as "idiopathic religiosity": apparently a somewhat morbid pathological condition. That is the account of salvation offered to us by a very learned man as the philosophy of Religion.[1] Now, beyond all question, the writer who dismisses a belief in our Lord's pre-existence by

[1] Höffding, *Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 259, 288.

calling it religiosity, would deny that a belief in personal immortality, or a belief in salvation, can be accounted for by the use of that expression. He would assuredly maintain that belief in immortality is not a mere fancy, and cannot be accounted for as religiosity. But since other and very able critics are none the less rejecting other great doctrines as mere creations of religiosity, since indeed there is no spiritual conception whatever which might not be so rejected, it becomes imperative on the Modernist to give reasons and proofs, of a conclusive character, to show why belief in a Deity is not due to mere religiosity, while he asserts that belief in Christ's pre-existence is. It is always possible to say that the associations of a particular period, the environment of a special century, make this or that belief almost inevitable. But it will be extremely difficult to show why that possibility applies to the pre-existence of Christ, and does not apply to the belief in immortality. For the question will inevitably arise whether that belief also is not promoted by our surroundings and traditions; and whether we should have equally acquired it had we been born into the atmosphere of a Confucian tradition. The readiness with which certain distinctly Christian beliefs are set aside by the term "religiosity" makes one doubt whether the arbitrariness of that expression is sufficiently realized. Its application to the pre-existence of Christ appears singularly unconvincing and superficial. That there were tendencies in the Apostolic Age likely to promote that belief may well be true. That those tendencies prove the unreality of the belief is a very different thing. It is asserted, but it is not proved. And in the nature of the case would be exceedingly difficult to prove. For there are many elements to be taken into account. The fact that the idea of pre-existence prevailed cannot possibly prove that actual pre-existence is not true.

II

Then, again, there is the important question of presuppositions. There is the sentence in which the writer, referring to advocates of the opinion that Jesus never thought of Himself as God, describes them as "students who are no longer hypnotized by orthodox presuppositions." I do not desire to lay too much stress upon this expression. But it is an important one. It is a question-begging epithet to describe the opposing school as hypnotized. One is naturally led to ask whether the hypnotizing power of a presupposition is a danger to which *all* presuppositions are liable, or *limited* exclusively to those which are of an orthodox nature. If this danger is supposed to be confined to the orthodox we certainly ought to have been told the reason why. But no such reason is given or could be given. For obviously *all* presuppositions may induce an hypnotic state. It is just as easy to be hypnotized by the presuppositions of Modernism as of those of traditionalism.

What increases my misgivings about the use of the phrase is that it comes from a writer who frankly acknowledges that he himself, and not so long ago, accepted a theory of the person of Christ entirely different from the Modernist explanation to which he now adheres. A convert from one doctrine to another may regard his former belief in two different ways. He may think of it as that which he himself has now rejected, or as that which he himself until recently believed. It will make a considerable difference to his judgment upon it, which of these two attitudes he adopts.

For it is very necessary to remember that not one of us escapes from presuppositions; from theories with which we approach the interpretation of Christ. We may be unduly influenced by an inherited view.

But so we may by the latest phase of human thought.

We shall therefore commend to each other's notice the warning against being hypnotized. But, as the danger awaits both schools, we may lay it to heart and dismiss it from our discussion.

III

Then, further, the Modernist statements which are before us contain a theory concerning the method of Divine Revelation. The writer says: "I know almost nothing about God's character apart from Jesus." Doubtless that assertion represents the personal experience of the individual who propounds it. But it cannot be taken to represent a universal fact. For it is contradicted by a very wide experience. And it is intrinsically dangerous to the whole conception of Deity. For it is one thing to say that Christ is the consummate and complete Revelation of God's character. It is another thing altogether to say that God's character is not revealed elsewhere; or that we know almost nothing about that character from any source save one. A Deity of Whose character almost nothing may be known either from Nature or Mankind; Whose self-revelation is exclusively condensed into one solitary historic personality, is a Deity Who raises serious problems indeed.

If we believe in the doctrine of divine immanence, then is all nature filled with God. He is in everything. And in the succession of natural events there is the immanence of the Divine reason. Nature is the product of the thought of God. Therefore Nature must be full of reason. It is a revelation in the sphere of the impersonal of the character of the Deity Who is immanent in it. No doubt it is a revelation which must be limited by the nature of the material through which it is revealed. The Revelation of God in nature will

be an imperfect Revelation. But yet a revelation of His character to some extent it certainly must be. Probably to most men in the present century Nature is a Revelation of three divine characteristics. It is a Revelation of power, of intelligence, and of beauty. But it is not for most men a Revelation of love. It is a problematical Revelation of goodness, because compromised by elements apparently inconsistent with love. There are facts in nature which shriek out against that Creed. Yet, on the other hand, it is not to be forgotten that other men have put a very different interpretation on Nature. Nothing could express this more finely than Wordsworth's famous lines:

"Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth
And ocean's liquid mass, in gladness lay
Beneath him. Far and wide the clouds were touched,
And in their silent faces could he read
Unutterable love."

It is of course open to any critic to say that this view of Nature, as a Revelation of unutterable love, was read into its doubtful features by a mind already possessed of the Revelation given in Christ. It may be so. But it is also possible that the deeply religious mind of a mystic may be enabled by some sure instinct, denied to ordinary men, to interpret the language of Nature more correctly. There may be hints in Nature of God's goodness as well as of His intelligence: hints which less spiritual minds are unable to detect.

I certainly acknowledge that William Blake's question about the Tiger, Did He Who made the Lamb make thee? or Fitzgerald's, shatter to fragments all that is and then remould it closer to the heart's desire, do undoubtedly represent the dominant interpretation of Nature in the present century. But on the other side, Tennyson's flower in the crannied wall suggests that much is there for those who have the eyes to see.

But further: if there is a Revelation of God in Nature, still more must there be a Revelation of Him in Mankind. For in man we rise into the sphere of self conscious personality, the sphere of spirit, by which, in the nature of things, the Divine can be more completely revealed than in the realm of the impersonal. Now man possesses a capacity of love and goodness which, in itself, as far as it goes, is a Revelation of the character of God. No doubt this Revelation is compromised by human hardness and unbelief. Nevertheless, it is simply a fact that most of us were led to believe in the love of God through our experience of the love lavished upon us in our homes. It was through human goodness, and not primarily, still less exclusively, through the goodness of Christ, that we came to realize the goodness of God. This was for most of us the actual process of our development. We did not begin with Religion at all. We began with human love. It is scarcely necessary to labour this. For if there is one proposition more congenial to some Modernists than another, it is that every good human character is, in proportion to its goodness, a Revelation of the character of God. But if this line of thought is true, it follows that to say we know almost nothing about God's character apart from Jesus, is to make an unguarded statement, which in point of fact is contrary to general experience. It is not well to speak as if the Revelation of God's character was made exclusively in Christ. God did not leave Himself without witness elsewhere, and prior to Christ's advent. One wonders what a modern Jew would have to say on that limited idea of Revelation. At least no Christian can maintain that the Religion of Israel knew nothing about God's character. It is certainly not a proposition which would have commended itself to the religious outlook of S. Paul.

When the ancient Jewish thinker was perplexed by

the enigmas and injustices of life, there came to him the wonderful reply: "Thou art sore troubled in mind for Israel's sake: lovest thou that people better than He that made them?"[1] That answer is, I think, unanswerable: most penetrating and profound. The argument is, whence comes this power to love which you possess? Was it not God-implanted? And can the creatures' capacity to love surpass that of the Creator? "Thou comest far short that thou shouldest be able to love my creature more than I."[2] No doubt the date of these utterances is uncertain. They may have been composed in the Christian era. But they are written without the smallest reference to Christ. And I venture to hold that the argument is valid apart from Christ.

Of course it is profoundly true that all other Revelations of the Divine character sink into relative insignificance beside the amazing Revelation of love in the person of Christ. Yet, at the same time, even the inferior Revelation in Humanity possesses a definite value of its own. And the great essential in theology is to see things in their right proportion. I must confess that the proposition here criticized raised in one's mind most serious misgivings. It seemed a one-sided judgment which, if applied to the great religious problems under contemplation, was almost sure to issue in inadequate and disproportionate results. And this is the reason why it seemed advisable to discuss it by way of introduction to our more immediate theme.

Finally, if justice is to be done to the Modernist movement we must always remember what its intention is. Modernism has been provisionally defined as an attempt to harmonize traditional doctrine with the theories of the present century. Its intention is to restate the Christian Religion in such a fashion as the critics and thinkers of our own time will have no

[1] 2 Esdras v. 33. [2] Esdras viii. 47.

reason to reject. Now this is an intention which we must all approve. To facilitate the assent of the modern mind to Christianity is a work on which every teacher among us is engaged. We are bound to present the Faith in a form adapted to modern needs. We are bound to recognize that biblical criticism of a sound and sober kind has greatly modified some theories of the past. We must keep an open mind, and be prepared to accept new truth. The evidence of history is irresistible that Churchmen have at least sometimes opposed as false what they ought to have promoted.

We see authority in Rome still asserting the genuineness of certain texts against the facts of critical investigation. We do not forget the medieval and reformation theories once extensively prevalent but now no longer tenable. We know something of the bewilderment of our generation in Creed. We are well aware that it is peculiarly true that we live in an age of transition.

And for all these reasons we must sympathize with the Modernist intention to restate the Faith. Restatement of a doctrine in terms intelligible to the modern mind is required from age to age by the changes in prevalent ideas. And where Restatement secures the essential meaning, there is no cause to challenge it or dispute. We may cordially welcome Restatement so long as it retains the original conception unimpaired. But we can only reject it when it substitutes a contrary doctrine for the ancient Faith. Unitarianism can never be a restatement of the Trinitarian Christianity. It is nothing else than its negation. What we have to complain of in a number of Modernist reconstructions is the curious inability of their authors to realize that no amount of asserting the essential identity can make two contrary theologies the same. A Jesus whose personality is simply human like our own, who did not exist before He appeared on earth, who is only

one of God's creatures, though the best, a man inspired, differing from Moses and the Prophets only in degree, is not the same, and nothing can make Him the same, as a Jesus Who is the Everlasting Son of the Father and Whose personality is literally divine. What disconcerts us is that able and learned men should minimize the abyss which separates these two conceptions, and should offer us the one as practically equivalent to the other.

It reminds us of the criticism once pronounced by a Nonconformist minister on an Anglican clergyman: he is afflicted by a constitutional incapacity to appreciate the plainest distinctions in dogmatic truth.

CHAPTER II

IN WHAT SENSE DID JESUS CALL HIMSELF SON OF GOD?

CRITICAL investigation at the present day attempts to go behind what the Apostles thought about the personality of Jesus to what Jesus thought about Himself. The desire is to discuss the self-consciousness of Christ. What was His own conception concerning His personality? In what relation did He believe Himself to stand to the Father? In order to solve this problem the question is raised: In what senses did Jesus call Himself Son of God?

That is the question which several writers attempted to answer in the Girton Conference of Modern Churchmen.

One of the writers said that "Our Lord's conception of Divine Sonship appears to have been twofold. First, He taught that all men are sons of God." That is supported by such sayings as "Ye are the children of the Highest."[1] Also by the direction to address God as our Father. This Sonship of God may be called natural, because it belongs to all men. Or we may call it moral, as indicating what man is intended to become. And this natural or moral Sonship of God which is common to all other men, Jesus regarded Himself as sharing.

Now we readily acknowledge that if Sonship of God means moral resemblance to Deity, Jesus not only possessed Sonship in that sense, but possessed it in an

[1] S. Luke vi. 35.

entirely unique degree, since He reached the ideal of purely human Sonship to the Father as no other human being ever did.

But, according to the writer already quoted, "there is a second kind of Divine Sonship which Jesus was conscious of sharing." This "may be called Messianic Sonship." That is to say, that Jesus was conscious of being God's Son in an official sense, as the chosen Deliverer of God's people.

Here, again, we shall all readily agree. For example, consider Christ's temptation. The account of it must have been given by Christ Himself to His disciples. An experience so intimate and personal could not otherwise have been known. It may therefore be regarded as part of the Words of Christ. The reiterated challenge, which forms its centre, "if Thou be the Son of God," unquestionably refers to our Lord's consciousness of being the Messiah. Indeed, the whole substance and form of the Temptation concerns Jesus in His official relation to the Father. It is essentially His trial as the Christ.

There is no doubt therefore that our Lord regarded Himself as Son of God in two senses.

But here the question comes, Did Jesus regard Himself as the Son of God in any higher sense?

The writer already quoted asks:

"Does the fact that He is the Son of God in this unique degree justify us in calling Him, as He is called in the Fourth Gospel, 'my God'? I would answer," he says, "that the language of devotion permits this, but such phraseology has not His direct sanction. It belongs not to the period of His earthly life, but arose as the result of theological development. Personally," he adds, "I do not think that He Who said to His disciples, 'Why call ye me Lord, Lord? and do not the things that I say,' cares very much about what we call Him provided that we obey Him."[1]

[1] P. 277.

This passage raises some very serious reflections. The writer thinks that Christ is indifferent to the names we give Him so long as we obey.

But what our Lord resented was an acknowledgment of His claim in *words* divorced from acknowledgment of His claim in *deeds*. If we would see how the language strikes a modern Jew, we may take the explanation given by Mr. Claude Montefiore. According to him, the sentence affirms that "mere nominal adherence will not suffice at the judgment." [1] It is a warning then, against the inconsistency of profession without practice. It is not in the least an indifference to definite conceptions about Him. On the contrary, it implies their importance. For the argument is, since you acknowledge what I am, how is it you refuse obedience to what I say? The intellectual acknowledgment of His authority requires practical submission to His will. That Christ is indifferent to what men call Him is not a true deduction from the text. Moreover, surely Christ cares for religious truth. He Who is reported to have said, "to this end was I born, for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth," must care whether we have, or have not, a true conception of what He is. When we remember how careful John the Baptist was to remove misconceptions about himself, it is inconceivable that our Lord cared less. If He was not Divine, He could not be indifferent to our believing in so serious a fiction; ascribing to Him a glory to which He had no right. And if He is Divine, He cannot be indifferent to the human race being left in ignorance of so glorious a fact.

And further, when we bear in mind that Christ expressly asked His Apostles, "Whom do men say that I am?" and immediately pushed the popular opinions aside as totally inadequate, and then went on to press

[1] *Synoptic Gospels*, II, p. 894.

the question upon the Apostolic circle, " But Whom say *ye* that I am ? " (ye, that is, who have had opportunities of insight which the masses have not), it is clear as light that He cared very much indeed whether His Disciples possessed an accurate understanding concerning Him.

Now comes the solemn question, Are we justified in calling Jesus by the awful name of Deity ? The writer's answer is that " the language of devotion permits this." I do not see how any thoughtful person can rest satisfied with that reply. For it evades the essential point. The point is not what the language of devotion permits, but whether that language corresponds with truth. Fervid devotion is liable to employ exaggerated phrases. But exaggeration should not be encouraged but avoided. For exaggeration is unreality. And nowhere should exaggeration be avoided with greater care than in ascription of the attributes of Deity. If Jesus is not really God, the language of devotion has no right to call Him so. Language is not devotionally permissible if it is theologically false. To sing hymns to Jesus as God, and to call Him so, while intellectually convinced that God is exactly what He is not, is to divide our consciousness into water-tight compartments, so that we simultaneously affirm with the heart and deny with the mind the selfsame tremendous proposition concerning Deity. I think this procedure tends to the confusion of all reasonable intelligence.

But as to calling Jesus " God," the writer asserts that " such phraseology has not His direct sanction. In other words, that Jesus Himself never claimed to be Son of God in the sense of Deity. This assertion is what we must now consider.

I propose at this point to leave the Fourth Gospel out of account ; not because its representation is unreliable ; but because reference to it, in the present

state of criticism, would be to many minds inconclusive. To many critics that Gospel contains primitive reflections on Christ rather than an actual report of His utterances. His utterances are, in their opinion, not only interwoven with primitive interpretations, so that disentanglement is peculiarly difficult, but modified by the sacred writer's theological view. Where this critical opinion prevails no quotation from the fourth Evangelist will bring convincing evidence of our Lord's self-consciousness. It is therefore better to confine attention to evidence less liable to dispute. Let us accordingly take the first three Gospels only for the present, and reserve the last under the head of Apostolic interpretation.

I

There is the question which Jesus put to the Pharisees, "What think ye of the Christ?" "Whose Son is He?"[1] In discussing this passage we must not allow ourselves to be led aside into irrelevant considerations. Whether David is the author of Psalm 110 is not to the point: because Jesus' contemporaries obviously assumed that he was. In any case they would agree with Jesus' statement that the passage was inspired. Whether the original reference is to the Messiah or not, is also not to the point. For clearly, that was the interpretation placed upon it by Jesus' hearers. Jesus is dealing with the passage on the basis of contemporary belief. The question then concerning the Messiah was this: "Whose Son is He?" The audience gave without hesitation the traditional reply, that the Messiah was the Son of David. But Jesus immediately showed that the Sonship of the Messiah was by no means so easily settled as the Jews supposed.

[1] S. Matt. xxii. 42; S. Mark xii. 35–37.

The traditional reply was insufficient. For David, in the inspired utterance of the 110th Psalm, had called the Messiah his Lord. Jesus therefore inquires "if David then calleth Him Lord, how is He his son?" That is, how can David's son be his superior in such a sense as to be called his Lord? Now, undoubtedly, the orthodox and historic answer to this question may be at once discounted by critics as an explanation based on later theological suppositions. But whatever answer may be given, it must be one which fits the circumstances: chief of which is that the Jews were unable to reply. Obviously, therefore, the real answer cannot be that it is not an unheard-of thing for a son to be more illustrious than his father. For the Pharisees could not have been reduced to silence, had they supposed this view of Lordship to be all that Jesus intended. There would be no problem at all, unless David called the Messiah his Lord in a sense suggestive of divine prerogatives. Jesus indeed left the problem unsolved. He sent the Jews away to think it out. But He insisted that there was more in the Sonship of the Messiah than meets the eye. There is a mystery about it, there is a problem to be solved. And the Jewish humanitarian view of the Messiah cannot solve it: whereas the orthodox answer does completely solve it. For if the Messiah is more than human, while yet He is human, it is at once explained how He can be at the same time both David's Son and David's Lord.

II

The second passage is the great utterance in S. Matthew xi. 27; S. Luke x. 21-22: "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him."

"All things are delivered unto Me of My Father." All things. It would be arbitrary to limit what is comprehensively expressed. The sentence is parallel to the passage at the Gospel's close, "All authority hath been given unto Me in Heaven and on earth." The reference is not merely to doctrine and teaching. It seems to imply universal religious control co-extensive with the human race. It is given by the Father. It is bestowed upon the Son. "Unto Me." It is emphatic. The resources of the Father and the attention of humanity are concentrated on Jesus.

Then follow three main declarations.

The first is "no one knoweth the Son save the Father." The original word for knoweth implies a knowledge which is penetrating and complete. It means the Father's comprehensive knowledge of the Son's very self.

Now that is a statement which is true of every other man. For any human being can say, "No one possesses a perfect knowledge concerning me but God alone." But if the speaker is only human, it is a superfluous piece of information. Why should a man solemnly inform the world that no one but God can read him through and through? Does not the very fact of making such an announcement imply a consciousness that there exists in his personality a mystery which God alone can fully understand?

The second declaration is "neither doth any know the Father save the Son."

Harnack understands the sentence to mean that Jesus had come to realize God as Father, and indeed as *His* Father; and that this knowledge of God as the Father made our Lord to become God's Son. Thus Christ's Sonship would mean nothing more than His knowledge of God as the Father. [1]

But to this interpretation Loisy replies that it cannot

[1] Harnack, *Das Wesen*, p. 81.

be what the sentence means.[1] For the Father does not become the Father because He knows the mind of the Son. But conversely He knows the Son because He is the Father. It is not His knowledge which constitutes His Fatherhood but His Fatherhood which accounts for His knowledge. And so it must be also with the Son. It is not our Lord's knowledge of the Father which constitutes His Sonship. But conversely He knows the Father because He is the Son.

Indeed, Harnack himself appears to have had misgivings about the adequacy of his interpretation of this wonderful sentence. For he goes on to add the remarkable reflection that how Christ came into consciousness of the uniqueness of His Sonship to the Father, that is Christ's secret, and no psychology will ever fathom it.[2]

The first and the second declarations go together. The first declaration is that no man knoweth the Son but the Father. The second is that no man knoweth the Father but the Son. Clearly these two declarations are deliberately parallel. They closely correspond. After asserting the Father's comprehensive knowledge of the Son, there is asserted the Son's comprehensive knowledge of the Father. That is to say, that the two declarations declare that the mutual knowledge of the Father and of the Son is complete. The Son's knowledge of the Father is as perfect as the Father's knowledge of the Son. That and nothing less is what these sentences affirm. And this second declaration is simply astounding.

The third declaration is: "And he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him." Its meaning clearly is that if members of the human race are to acquire full knowledge of the Father, it must be imparted to

[1] Loisy, *L'Evangile et L'Eglise*, pp. 88, 89.
[2] *Das Wesen*, p. 81, 1900.

them by the Son. The only perfect revelation of the Father is that which is acquired from Christ.

In this great passage, what is brought out with startling clearness is the distinction between the Son's relation to the Father and His relation to the human race. The Father is set on the one side, the entire human race on the other. Between them is the Son. And the Son is set with the Father and not with men. For the Father and the Son are associated in a relationship which is absolutely unique and mutually perfect. They are united in an intimacy unshared by mankind. They alone possess, Each of the Other, a knowledge which is comprehensive and equal. It is *the* Father and *the* Son; on this level they are unapproachable.

Then, turning from the Father towards Mankind, the Son is declared to be the only medium for the communication of perfect knowledge of the Father to the human race. And the reason why He alone is the complete revelation of God is, because He stands to the Father in a relationship so intimate as to make His knowledge of the Father absolutely perfect and complete.

It is very interesting at this point to recall a criticism by a modern liberal Jew upon this passage. Mr. Claude Montefiore, in his remarkable commentary on the Synoptic Gospels, understands the words to mean that " all this knowledge has been entrusted or delivered by God to Jesus, and to Jesus only. Thus no one knows the true purposes of God except Jesus and those to whom Jesus may explain them."

That is Mr. Montefiore's interpretation. He takes the words as the claim made by one who is purely human and nothing more. Upon this he makes the following criticism: " It seems hard to believe that Jesus uttered these words." " The exclusiveness of the saying that no one knows the Father except the

Son is painful: one can only hope that Jesus never uttered it."

If the words of Jesus were the utterance of one whose personality was purely human and nothing more, then surely Mr. Claude Montefiore's criticism would be justified. The claim which the words involve is too great to be reasonable within the limits of a purely human self-consciousness. It is only when they are understood to proceed from a superhuman personality that they become morally permissible. We must agree with Mr. Montefiore that if the utterer were no more than man, the language is intolerable.

Christ's unqualified assurance that His own moral decisions are invariably identical with those of the Father; His assurance without the smallest shadow of misgiving, that they are subject to no revision, liable to no error, is simply not human.

More still than that. Christ's consciousness of capacity not only to disentangle all human motives, but to discern unerringly the moral worth of every son of man, and that the judgment pronounced on any human character by the Son is as irreversible, as infallibly true, as the judgment pronounced by the Father, in a word, that from His judgment there can be no appeal: this also, like the former, is not only astounding, it is simply not human.

And further, Christ's demand of the loyalty of all other sons of God to Himself; demand of a greater love for Him than for any God-given human relationship (father or mother, son or daughter);[1] His assertion of the consequences before the Father of their confessing Him or denying Him before men:[2] cannot be explained by saying that this loyalty, this love, this confession of Him, passes from Him to the Father.

Mr. Claude Montefiore hopes that Jesus never

[1] S. Matt. x. 37. [2] S. Matt. x. 32, 33.

uttered it. Certainly, if I were a Jew, so should I. But what if He did utter it? and all the evidence declares that He did. Both S. Matthew and S. Luke record it. I agree that the language is not only painful, it is unbearable, from one who is no more than Man. But still, if Jesus said it, what then? Well then, it is either true, or else it betrays a mental condition which has lost its balance. And there are German critics who see quite plainly, quite logically, that, being unable to accept the former, they are driven to the latter. Hence painful and deplorable inquiries, Was Jesus an ecstatic? Was His psychological condition sound? Exceedingly painful as all this is to those who adore our Lord, it is, after all, created by a consciousness that His language is not permissible to a human personality. They warn us in what direction the alternative lies. After all, it is only a modern version of what His contemporaries who rejected Him said: "He hath a devil and is mad: why hear ye Him?"[1]

III

These passages from S. Mark and S. Matthew lead us to conclude that our Lord, by implication, declared Himself to be the Son of God in a higher sense than Modernist critics are prepared to admit. In other words, Christ used the term "Son of God" in three senses. First, of resemblance in character, a moral Sonship. Secondly, of official Sonship, as being uniquely commissioned. Both these meanings being of course strictly within the limits of what is purely human. But thirdly, of essential Sonship, as being on a level of equality with the Father.

But this conclusion does not by any means depend on isolated texts. It is endorsed by other considerations.

[1] S. John x. 20.

It is deeply significant that all through the report of the Words of Christ, both in the Synoptic tradition and in S. John, He is consistently represented as drawing a careful distinction between the Father's relation to mankind and the Father's relation to Himself. Christ never treats the two relationships as if they were the same. He directed the disciples when they pray to address God as our Father. But there is no trace of His repeating the Lord's Prayer Himself, or of His calling on God as our Father together with His disciples. On the contrary, it is invariably My Father and your Father, My God and your God; never the common God and Father of us all. This distinction steadily maintained throughout, justifies the interpretation that in the consciousness of Jesus, God was His Father in a sense in which He is not ours. While He is identified with man, there is a distinction between Himself and the human race which can never be overpassed.

When any created person is conscious of being selected from among his fellows, divinely called and chosen, entrusted with some sacred work to do for others' sake, and endowed with certain gifts whereby to perform it: what are the thoughts of God which such a consciousness will naturally create?

He will be filled with wonder at his being selected while others have been passed by. He will wonder why God, having millions from whom to choose, should have chosen him. He will be well aware of the existence of other persons who, if endowed with his opportunities and his gifts, would have served God's purposes better than he will ever do. Any priest or any religious knows this feeling very well. You picture what another would be and do if he held your place: if he had received the graces freely lavished on you. You are inclined to think that God has miscalculated, and made a strange mistake. Or anyhow, you are humbled, and

overwhelmed with thankfulness for unmerited gifts, and occasions of service which were certainly not deserved.

Illustrate this in the case of a man. S. Paul was deeply conscious of being the object of divine selection. God had chosen him from his very birth, to a wonderful mission among men. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given." Why was he ever chosen? That is a mystery more or less inscrutable. One thing it does; the weakness of the human agent demonstrates the divinity of the power supporting him and working through him. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the sufficiency of the power may be of God and not of us." That may partly account for the selection.

It humbles him profoundly to have been so chosen. And to this divine selection he responds with thankfulness, for he learns whence comes his strength. "I thank Him that enabled me . . . for that He counted me faithful."

Illustrate this in the case of a woman. At the Annunciation the Blessed Virgin is bidden to realize that out of all the millions of women she has been divinely selected to the highest honour that can ever befall a woman; that God has chosen her to be the Mother of the world's Deliverer. And what is the effect of that announcement? She is overwhelmed at the mystery of the Divine selection. That she of all women should be chosen. This is the burden of her song. She gives utterance in human amazement to the wonder of the thought: He that is mighty hath done to me great things, and God hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden.

Now if Jesus Christ was simply a human person, and nothing more, He would, like the other chosen ones, be overwhelmed by a sense of the incredible wonder that God should have passed by so many

millions of the sons of men; and that He should have been the object of selection, endowed with such exceptional and unrivalled gifts, and lifted to such elevation over mankind. He, like the other chosen ones, would be profoundly conscious of graces undeserved, and would praise the Father in terms corresponding to those in which S. Paul and the Virgin praised Him. Creaturely thankfulness for unmerited gifts is the natural feeling of the religious spirit in any purely human personality.

Now there is nothing, absolutely nothing, corresponding to this in the utterances of Christ. There are thanksgivings. "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." [1] But there is no thanksgiving for being chosen to be the Deliverer. There is no consciousness of unmerited gifts; not the shadow of the idea that some other man might have been selected instead of Him. There is no praise to God for the exceptional graces and opportunities received.

Thus the attitude that Jesus adopts towards the Father is emphatically not the attitude of a purely human being toward Deity, and it cannot be accounted for on that supposition. For that is an explanation which no legitimate exposition can elicit from Christ's words. It is precisely the absence of any such qualifying notion which is the characteristic of the language. No mere mission from the Father could justify or account for so personal a claim. No consciousness of inspiration can explain it. No indwelling of divine grace and power in a human personality can make it reasonable. For the very humility of the Son of Man must perforce compel Him, if He is no more than Human, to avert such loyalty and love from Himself

[1] S. Matt. xi. 25.

to His Father in Heaven. The language implies a transcendent consciousness.

And with this implication agrees the profoundly significant way in which our Lord speaks of the Son and the Father.

It is true that Christ's claim of Sonship to the Father is rather by implication than by direct assertion in so many words. But is not that the way in which a Being Who regarded Himself as the Father's equal would be bound to act? Let us try to imagine, if we can, apart from what the Gospels say, how a Being conscious of His own divinity would impart that consciousness to other people. Suppose, then, the arrival on this planet of Deity in the form of man. Is it not obvious that His self-revelation must be slow; that His moral perfection must first be understood before His relation to the Father could be appreciated? Is not the idea of Deity in human form a stupendous idea? Would it not present peculiar, almost insuperable difficulties to men trained in the strict Monotheism of Israel? What else could such a Being do, but gradually lead His hearers on, by hint and implication and suggestion, and slowly dispose them towards the ultimate attainment of the awful reality? To do otherwise, prematurely to give full definite utterance to the fact, would only frustrate the object which His self-revelation had in view. It would not win. It would seriously repel.

That is to say, that if we attempt to analyse for ourselves what the attitude of Incarnate Deity, supposing such to exist, must inevitably be, it seems that we are compelled to say that He would conduct Himself substantially as the Christ of the first three Evangelists. The reserves and the utterances of the Synoptic Christ, His use of language implying more than it actually asserts, seems precisely the sort of reserve, and the sort of utterance, which a Divine personality in the flesh

would, in such a situation, employ. It seems to me that these Evangelists have, with a most unerring sureness of insight, exactly grasped and described the psychological requirements of the case. The Christ whom they depict is a Figure of divine delicacy, for the very reason that He does not advance His highest prerogatives before the time, nor beyond the power of His hearers to apprehend.

IV

There are two further reflections on the Self-consciousness of Jesus, both of which occur in the Report of the Girton Conference, and which it is important to bear in mind.

1. One is as follows:

"We must investigate with all the exactitude of true reverence the self-consciousness of Jesus so far as it has been revealed to us in such records as we have. This is a task which is especially laid upon the theologians of the present day; and it is a peculiarly difficult one: just because it consists so very largely of reading between the lines, it requires something of the genius of the dramatist and the poet, as well as of the historical critic, if it is to be done at all adequately." [1]

Certainly a study of the self-consciousness of Jesus is a most difficult undertaking. It does consist, as the writer says, largely of "reading between the lines." But to do this aright in the case of the supreme religious personality in history requires something more than gifts of the dramatist and the poet. It really requires above all things else a spiritual insight, which is a very hard thing for any among us to possess. And precisely because such spiritual insight is comparatively rare, we set more value on the original exponents of Christ.

[1] *Report*, p. 604.

For no man, whatever his religion may be, can well deny that S. Paul and the Fourth Evangelist were spiritual experts, unsurpassed in the annals of religious experience. Which at least is suggestive of the strong probability that where ordinary men are dull and heavy, these men could see and penetrate and understand. Now they endorse the conclusion at which we have arrived, from a study of Jesus' words. In that endorsement we may rest secure.

2. The other thought is that

> "The final Christology will not consist of the irreducible minimum of what we may reasonably believe Jesus to have thought about Himself, but of what the religious consciousness throughout the ages has discovered Him to be." [1]

That sentence contains, as it appeared to me, the refutation of the doubts which his brother Modernist has raised.

[1] *Report*, p. 305.

CHAPTER III

THE APOSTOLIC INTERPRETATION OF CHRIST

MODERNIST critics are apt to distinguish three different Christologies or theories concerning the person of our Lord within the pages of the New Testament.

There is said to be first, an Adoptionist Christology, that is to say, the doctrine that Christ was a man whom God adopted and exalted to heavenly glory. There is said to be, secondly, what may be termed a pre-existent Christology, meaning thereby the doctrine that Christ's life began in Heaven, but that He was nothing more than a Created personality. There is said to be, thirdly, a Divine Christology, meaning thereby the doctrine that Christ's personality was literally Divine. This is to be found in the teaching of the Fourth Evangelist.

If these three conceptions are to be identified with Apostolic names they might be called respectively Petrine, Pauline, and Johannine. The conclusion which a leading Modernist draws from this analysis is that "Primitive Christians were free to hold any" of these theories, "or even to try to hold all three together, and yet remain full members and accredited ministers in the Church of Christ." From this asserted freedom to select between three theories concerning Christ, it is inferred that "no single Christology is so authoritative that it alone must be held in the Christian Church." And therefore it is contended that the

clergy of to-day are free to choose which opinion they may prefer. And the opinion which the Modernist prefers is the Adoptionist, to the exclusion of the other two.

This kind of analysis of the Apostolic Christology is nothing new. It has been held by certain continental critics, at least for the last half-century.

It must not, therefore, be treated for a moment as an original invention of a few Englishmen, or as if it had never been heard of before the last few years.[1]

I

First, then, consider what is known as the Adoptionist conception of Christ's Person. This is said to have been held by S. Peter and the primitive Church at Jerusalem. And it is certainly true that in the early sermons of S. Peter our Lord is represented as a man, divinely approved and exalted.[2] S. Peter indeed describes our Lord as "the author of Life,"[3] but represents Him as a prophet.[4] As one whom God "anointed with the Holy Spirit"; "who went about doing good"; and whom God "ordained to be the judge of the living and the dead."[5] This language affirms that Jesus was a man, adopted by the Deity, in a special sense, to be His Son, endowed with unique authority and power, exalted as supreme above the human race. But it does not ascribe to Him any characteristics surpassing the level of the purely human. It has indeed been thought that His position as judge of all mankind implies superhuman character; but however true this may be as an inference, superhuman character is not explicitly declared in S. Peter's teaching.

[1] E.g., cf. Biedermann, *Christliche Dogmatik*, 1885, i. 81 ff.
[2] Acts ii. 22.
[3] Acts iii. 15.
[4] Acts iii. 22.
[5] Acts x. 38, 42.

II

The second form of New Testament Christology is that which ascribes to Christ a real pre-existence. It maintains that the person who appeared on earth as Mary's Son had already lived in the heavenly sphere. He may be called God's image. He is the first of the creatures. But He is nothing more than a created being. We cannot define the duration of His pre-existence. But the one thing certain is that He is not eternal.

The Jews are said to have believed in the pre-existence of the Messiah, and certain critics maintain that S. Paul took this Jewish idea of the pre-existence of the Messiah and applied it to our Lord. Thus for example, a critic writes, that S. Paul "taught that Jesus was the Son of God because a Spiritual personality, pre-existing in Heaven, had become incarnate in Him." [1] This pre-existent Messiah was not meant by S. Paul to be regarded as Divine. What S. Paul held was that the self in Christ literally pre-existed, but that this pre-existence was not eternal. In other words, S. Paul agreed with Arianism.

If any one regards this theory as a mere extravagance of some German critics, it must be remembered that a pre-existent Christology is not only asserted in the Girton Conference Report to be contained in the New Testament, but also to be a permissible opinion for a Modern Christian in preference to belief in the eternal nature of Christ's person.

Now I suppose it would be possible to apply to a created being, who descended to earth from Heaven, the Apostolic language that one who "was rich, for our sakes became poor." For this language, taken by itself, ascribes to the Person of whom it speaks an exchange of a higher for an inferior state, a perfectly

[1] Pfleiderer, *Early Christian Conception of Christ*, p. 17.

sublime act of sympathy and condescension; but it does not define the nature of the heavenly Being Who did this thing. It does not declare that Christ is equal with the Father. It does not declare His Deity. It does not even explain whether His pre-existence was temporary or eternal.

But this isolated sentence is very far indeed from being a complete account of the Pauline Christology.

For S. Paul elsewhere affirms concerning this pre-existent Christ that by Him the world was created. The whole creation is founded in Christ. "All things have been created through Him and unto Him, and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." [1]

And in the great passage in Philippians a still loftier conception of His Person is taught.

The expression in Philippians ii., "the form of a servant," means the characteristics which declare the individual to be human. It is an appearance which certifies his humanity. And the corresponding expression, "the form of God," means the characteristics which declare the individual to be divine. The form of God cannot exist where God is not, any more than the form of man where man is not. Accordingly, just as "the form of a servant" denotes the reality of Christ's manhood, "the form of God" denotes the reality of Christ's Godhead. The one expression says that He is truly human, the other says that He is truly divine.

And S. Paul makes perfectly plain which of these two states, or conditions of existence, he regards as that in which our Lord originally lived. For he speaks of our Lord as being, or existing originally, in the form of God, and subsequently taking the form of a servant. Thus the form of God is our Lord's original state. The form of a servant is that which He afterwards adopted. The one is natural, the other is assumed.

And to make his doctrine still more plain, S. Paul

[1] Col. i. 16, 17.

adds that our Lord's original condition was one of "equality with God." Now no one can possess equality with God unless he is literally divine. It is an extraordinarily startling statement for a Jew to have made.

Then next, S. Paul describes the attitude of this Person towards His own Divine prerogatives. It is represented as disinterested, altruistic. He was in a state of equality with the Uncreated: in conditions which manifested the life of God and its glory. But He "counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God." He did not grasp His own advantages in a selfish spirit. He viewed them not as rights but as duties, as enabling Him to impart unspeakable blessings to mankind.

Nor did He content Himself with reflecting that prerogatives are opportunities of service; He acted on that principle. "He made Himself of no reputation," says the Authorized Version. "He emptied Himself," says the Revised, "taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man." We must express it in other words to illustrate the tremendous force of the Apostle's doctrine. Christ impoverished Himself. He reduced His self-expression. He imposed upon Himself what may be compared to a sort of eclipse. He refused to give effect to the equality with God which belonged to Him. And in what manner did He achieve all this? By taking the form of a servant. He made the greatest renunciation conceivable. He restricted Deity here on earth within the limits of Humanity. He never ceased, of course, for a single moment to be literally Divine, but He experienced a genuine earthly career within strictly human limitations.

There follows the corresponding exaltation: "Wherefore also God highly exalted Him." It must occur to every reader of these words that whereas S. Paul

says that our Lord impoverished Himself, he does not say that our Lord exalted Himself. What he says is that God exalted Him. It may be asked, Does not this language imply that our Lord is inferior to Deity? The expression, if taken by itself, is certainly liable to that inference. But that inference cannot be true, for the following reasons:

For, in the first place, the words must not be taken out of their context. The Person of whom S. Paul writes is one who originally existed in the form of Deity.

In the second place, the exaltation corresponds with the humiliation. Our Lord is conceived as restored to the heights which He occupied before. He does not assume a higher rank in Heaven than that which He held originally. He could not: because that rank is the highest.

And thirdly, there are only two ways in which S. Paul could have expressed it. Either he must say that Christ exalted *Himself*, or else he must say that *God* exalted Him. The former expression would certainly have emphasized Christ's power to resume what He laid aside. But the latter expression lays stress on the lowliness of the state to which He had condescended. Our Lord's humiliation is His own will and deed. His exaltation is the Father's. And this distinction between the condescension, as His own act, and the uplifting, as the Father's act, is singularly appropriate for one in human limits. It makes our Lord's renunciation of the Divine prerogatives even more utterly and amazingly complete. It harmonizes with the lowliness of Deity self-reduced to humanity. He lowered Himself to our estate, but He waited for the Father to restore Him. I think the Apostle naturally wrote this way because he wanted to give more forcible expression to the abasement of the Incarnation. It probably never occurred to him

that his phrase could be explained in any other way. Indeed, taken with the passage as a whole, it cannot.

And so the Apostle teaches that God "gave unto Him the name which is above every name." What is the name which is above every name? There is only one name to which that ascription applies. It is the All Holy Name. It is the unapproachable Name, the Name that none can rival or dispute. It is the name of Deity. It is not the name of Jesus. For that name was not ascribed to Christ by God as a reward for His great renunciation. The Name to which S. Paul refers is that ascribed to Him at His exaltation.

And the statement that God gave to Christ "the name which is above every name," cannot possibly mean God ascribing to one who was only human the name of Deity, as a reward for His excellence. God cannot endow a man with the attributes of Deity. Such ascription of Divine prerogative to manhood was quite unthinkable for a Jew. And Christ has been expressly stated to have existed originally in the form of God.

S. Paul can only mean that God represented Christ to mankind in terms of Deity, because that denotes what Christ is. God giving to Christ the name which is above every name is a vindication before mankind of the real nature of the Person Who had lived among them in such lowliness.

That this is the true interpretation of S. Paul's language is proved by the following words: for the Apostle goes on to explain why God ascribed to Christ the name above every name. The purpose was "that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow"; that is, in an act of worship directed to Him; and "that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." This acknowledgment of Christ as "Lord" can only mean Lord in the highest of all possible senses. It is the sense in which it is

ascribed to Deity. And this ascription of Deity to Christ is "to the glory of God the Father"; for thereby a depth of meaning is assigned to the Fatherhood of God which was unknown before: God is revealed as the Father because He has a Son.

III

What is called the third type of Apostolic Christology is that given by the Fourth Evangelist. It is represented in the prologue to S. John by the use of the term "the Word."

What did S. John intend by that mysterious expression? Is it a person or only an influence?

Some distinguished critics have maintained that in the Fourth Gospel Christ is not represented as claiming a real pre-existence but only an ideal one. They hold that when our Lord is reported as referring in prayer to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was,[1] this language need not signify anything more than an ideal pre-existence of Christ by anticipation in the mind of God.[2] And, in support of this theory, appeal has been made to such sentences as "the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world";[3] also to the description of Salvation as "laid up for you in Heaven."[4]

But in answer to this it has been justly observed that this interpretation "treats the passage as if its import were: Confer upon me now the glory which has been designed and kept for me from eternity; whereas it really says: Bestow upon me the glory which I *possessed* at Thy side, in loving fellowship with Thee before the world existed."[5]

The passage asserts the pre-existence of Christ

[1] S. John xvii. 5.
[2] Wendt and Beyschlag.
[3] S. Matt. xxv. 34.
[4] Col. i. 5 and 1 Peter i. 4.
[5] Stevens, *Johannine Theology*, p. 119.

Himself: not the pre-existence of a glory destined for Him. It is "the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." And the passage appealed to in support of the rejection of real pre-existence is not parallel. To make it parallel it would be necessary to make our Lord say, "Come, ye Blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom in which you have participated from the foundation of the world."

To put it more plainly still. The *glory* of which Christ speaks is the same glory which existed before the Creation. But also the *possessor* of that glory is the same.

But there is another passage in the Fourth Evangelist which confirms the idea of actual pre-existence of Christ.

"I came out from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and go unto the Father." [1] Is it not clear in this text that the World is the sphere into which Christ temporarily enters, and from which He withdraws? [2] It is no more the sphere in which He begins than that in which He ends. It is not His normal, natural, or original condition.[3] The sphere to which in reality He belongs is Deity. From the Father He arrived. To the Father He returns. The sphere to which He goes is the same as that from which He came. His coming out is just as real as His going back. Both experiences are equally those of a person: and that person is one and the same.

It is therefore quite impossible to exclude from the Fourth Gospel Christ's claim to personal pre-existence with the Father.

And this is what the Author intended by the use of that difficult expression "the Word." There is no probability that he used it in any Greek philosophical

[1] S. John xvi. 28. [2] Cf. Weiss, ii. 334.
[3] Loisy, *Le Quatrième Evangile*, 1903, p. 794.

meaning to denote an impersonal influence. It seems clear that he was developing the Jewish scriptural sense of the expression. We are justified in saying that this term, "the Word," is used in three meanings in the Scriptures. First, impersonal. The Word of God is a divine utterance or message. Secondly, the Word became personified: as when it is said, "He sent His Word and healed them"; or when the figure on the white horse, in the Revelation of S. John, is called "the Word of God"[1] Thirdly, the Word is viewed as actually personal, here in the Introduction to the Fourth Gospel.[2]

Indeed, the prologue to S. John compels us to say this. Christ is there represented as the Word. Five statements are made concerning Him. First, the eternity of the Word: He was "in the beginning." Secondly, His abiding fellowship with Deity: the Word was "with God." Thirdly, His identity of essence with Deity: "the Word was God." It is not said that the Word was divine, but that the Word was God: that is, not Godlike but possessor of Deity. The writer "affirms a distinction of persons, but an identity of essence, between the Word and the Father." Fourthly, He is said to have created the World: "all things were made by Him." Fifthly, He is the source of Spiritual life to mankind.[3]

This is unquestionably a Christology distinguished above the other two. It may fairly be called the Divine Christology.

IV

These, then, are what have been called the three different New Testament Christologies: the Adopted Man, the pre-existent creature, the Eternal Son.

[1] Rev. xix. 11.
[2] Cf. Stevens, *Johannine Theology*, p. 71.
[3] Cf. Stevens, *Johannine Theology*, 1903, pp. 88–94.

We have considered them separately. They must now be compared. How did they arise? In what relation do they stand to each other? Are they mutually exclusive? or do they constitute a process of development?

1. Let us take the Adoptionist theory first.

Now it is self-evident that all belief in Jesus began from the human nature. It was absolutely impossible for belief in Him to begin in any other way. It could not begin with pre-existence, still less with belief that He was Divine. He presented Himself to them as Man. As such it was of course simply inevitable that they should regard Him. No further idea would at first enter their minds. Their experience during His ministry might well fill them with astonishment and bewilder them, if they began to reflect on the implication of His authoritative claims. But whatever they might come to believe in process of time, they must have begun with the human. He was primarily to them a man who went about doing good. They began with His career on earth. They came to regard Him as exalted to heavenly glory.

2. But as their contemplation of Him passed from earth to Heaven, wider problems necessarily confronted them, and the status of the glorified Son of Man became the subject of reflection.

If the pre-existence of the Messiah was already a Jewish belief, it would be impossible to say that Jesus, regarding Himself as the Messiah, did not hold and teach the doctrine of His pre-existence. And in any case, the exaltation of the Messiah to heavenly glory made the belief in His pre-existence easy for His disciples to conceive. Contemplation of the Christ in glory compelled the problem to be faced: has He entered a sphere entirely new to Him, or does He find Himself where He was before? Reflection did not rest content with the Adoptionist idea. That idea

was true as far as it went, but it was entirely inadequate to explain the facts. The belief that Jesus was a man who was divinely adopted and exalted, developed into the belief that Jesus pre-existed in Heaven. We have seen this belief in the Christology of S. Paul.

There is not any real ground for supposing that S. Paul's belief in the pre-existence of Christ was not shared by S. Peter and the Church at Jerusalem. The fact that the doctrine is not found in S. Peter's sermons is no argument against his belief in it. For it must be remembered that it is not mentioned in the sermons of S. Paul. And it may well be that, in order of instruction, what came first was the doctrine of Christ's exaltation into heavenly glory, rather than the doctrine of His pre-existence in it.

"There is, so far as I can see, no reason to doubt that the original disciples of Christ, if they had not grasped the idea of His pre-existence while they followed Him on earth, did so after His death and resurrection. And S. Paul unquestionably held it. In all probability the author of the Fourth Gospel had known this article of faith as one commonly held among Christians, and had accepted it, long before he wrote his Gospel." [1]

3. Moreover, the Christology of S. Paul is in this respect most significant. For he taught the Adoptionist Christology in his sermons, as reported in the Acts. But he also taught the pre-existent Christology in his Epistles. And more than that: he taught the eternal pre-existence of our Lord in the form of God; so that he agrees substantially with the Divine Christology of the Fourth Evangelist. Thus S. Paul stands between the Petrine and the Johannine Christologies. He accepts the Adoptionist doctrine of S. Peter. He also accepts the Divine Christology of S. John. It therefore appears that the full process of the development with

[1] Stanton, *The Gospels as Historical Documents*, iii. p. 172.

regard to the person of our Lord, first that He was human and adopted, secondly that He was a spiritual being who had pre-existed, thirdly that He had eternally pre-existed in the form of God, had already taken place within the mind of the Apostle to the Gentiles.

And, further, it appears that S. Paul did not discard one of these in favour of the other, but held all these three doctrines together; and so far from regarding them as inconsistent, or mutually exclusive, viewed them as stages necessary to a full explanation of the Person of Christ.

4. It is sometimes objected that an Adoptionist Christology which declares that God adopted a man and exalted Him, is logically inconsistent with a Christology which declares that a divine Being descended to earth and became incarnate.

Of course they are mutually exclusive, if the Adoptionist idea is understood to involve a clear dogmatic assertion that the personality of Jesus was human, and that He had no existence prior to His Birth at Bethlehem. But the primitive idea of Christ, as the divinely adopted Son of Man, was never held in such a way as to determine the nature of Christ's personality, or to exclude belief in His pre-existence. As Dr. Sanday said, the primitive Evangelists were not great thinkers. There was no revolution in Christian thought when to the idea of His adoption the idea of His pre-existence was added. It was not a case of a reconstruction which denies the original belief. It was extended to a larger circle of ideas in which the less was included. It is so easy for the acute and logical critic of the present day to put these Christologies in the form of a dilemma: either the person in Christ was human, and then He cannot have been Divine; or else He was Divine, and then He cannot have been adopted. One theory teaches a human

Son of God adopted and exalted: the other theory teaches a Divine Son of God embodied in the flesh. These two conceptions are mutually exclusive. Between them you will have to choose. For the same individual cannot possibly be both. Well, all that is perfectly logical and conclusive from the modern point of view. But it is not conclusive from the standpoint of the Jerusalem Circle of Christian faith. S. Peter was neither a systematic theologian nor a logician. There is no ground to suppose that his adoptionist idea excluded the Pauline pre-existent doctrine, or that S. Peter could not hold the one together with the other. These conceptions can undoubtedly be formulated in a shape which presents an insurmountable dilemma to the modern mind. But that is only due to reading into them presuppositions and implications which make them mutually exclusive. And to ascribe these presuppositions to the primitive Christian mind is a downright anachronism.

But it is not correct to say that primitive Christians were at liberty to hold which of these three Christologies they preferred. What actually happened was (what naturally must occur in a great revelation), that the fullness of its meaning gradually dawned upon its first adherents. They began with the most elementary and obvious. They advanced to profounder ideas. But these latter were seen to be involved in the former, required by the former. It was not therefore open to them to stop at the undeveloped germ, for they came to feel it superficial. Any genuine adherent was constrained to advance to a more complete conception than the mere rudimentary. And what is historically known as Christianity is not a Religion which propounds nothing more than an Adoptionist Christ. It is one which embraces the three types of biblical Christology as stages in the process of an inevitable development.

V

We come last to the Modernist attitude towards these Christologies. A leading Modernist writer in the Girton Conference contends that since three conceptions of the Person of Christ existed in the New Testament, primitive Christians were clearly at liberty to hold which of the three Christologies they pleased; and the same freedom must be accorded to the Modern Christian as well. Accordingly he claims the right to select the Adoptionist Christology, and to regard our Lord simply as a human person, divinely inspired and exalted to the right hand of the Father, but rejecting belief in Him as the eternal Son.

This means that the principal portions of the Pauline and Johannine teaching are set aside. The fact that S. Paul taught vastly more than the Adoptionist idea is not regarded as any evidence of truth. The text selected by Modernists as representing the right conception concerning our Lord is that "God was in Christ." And this is selected to the exclusion of all passages which affirm His pre-existence, or His activity in the creation, and still more His equality with the Father. And the text "God was in Christ" is selected precisely because it is capable of a vague and general interpretation. It need not be understood to mean more than the influence of the Deity upon a human Person.

Thus the Modernist contention is that we may return to the Adoptionist idea. We are invited to hold that the Person of Christ was nothing more than human; that He did not pre-exist, or if He did for some uncertain period, was certainly not eternal, being only a creature, and not divine in the strict and literal meaning of that expression. That is to say, we are invited to reverse the process of evolution; to return to the primitive germ from which the entire

conception of Christ developed ; and also to give that germ a rigid exclusiveness, which is the very contrary to that power of growth which it displayed in the Apostolic days. Because Christian thought began with a minimum Christology, it is supposed that we are justified in confining our belief to that minimum. As for the fuller Christology into which the Apostolic belief developed, it is declared to possess no authority. It may be reasonably disowned and set aside. The earliest impression about Christ, which matured Apostolic reflection regarded as insufficient, is asserted to be quite sufficient, and indeed apparently as the whole of the truth concerning Him.

These propositions may fairly be regarded as proposals which stand in need of proof.

CHAPTER IV

THE VALUE OF THE APOSTOLIC INTERPRETATION OF CHRIST

AFTER considering what the Apostolic interpretation is, the question arises, What is it worth? Is it accurate, at least, in substance? Can it be accepted as essentially and fundamentally true? The tendency of Modernist criticism is to be profoundly distrustful of the Apostolic interpretation of Christ. Some leading members of this school are of opinion that the words of Christ have been considerably modified, not only in form but in substance, by the experiences of the Apostolic Church; so that the Gospels have not reported what Christ actually said nor, in a good many cases, what Christ actually meant, but rather what His Disciples supposed Him to maintain. His adherents have ascribed to Him more than He intended, and sometimes what He did not intend. They have made Him the exponent of their theories rather than of His own. Accordingly the task of the critic is to disentangle Christ's Words from the Apostolic modifications of them. The Religion which Jesus held, and the Religion which His Disciples taught, are pronounced to be remarkably different. Hence the Apostolic interpretation is regarded as due to early Christian presuppositions which were unsuitable to the purpose of explaining Him, and indeed have seriously altered the character of the simple religion which Jesus believed, and have changed it into a Religion of a seriously different kind.

Critics of this persuasion therefore regard the Apostolic interpretation of Christ as quite untrustworthy in a number of fundamental doctrines. And the extent to which the Apostolic interpretation is regarded as valueless is certainly one of the most conspicuous features in recent religious thought.

It is necessary to have before us some chief examples. And here the reminder must be repeated that the opinions to be quoted are the opinions of individual critics, with which in certain cases other critics would disagree. But they exhibit the tendency of a school, and have been extensively maintained.

Certain Modernist critics, recognizing that the Death of Christ is interpreted by S. Paul as an offering or sacrifice, presented before the Father, on behalf of the sinful human race, contend that this doctrine of the Apostle is nothing more than a natural, perhaps inevitable, but none the less unfortunate, application of obsolete Jewish presuppositions to the simple Religion taught by Christ.

Other critics admit that S. Paul, or at any rate, S. John, went so far as to maintain a doctrine of Incarnation, but they set the doctrine aside as a product of "early Christian religiosity"; an unfortunate transference of Greek metaphysic to the sphere of Semitic faith.

Again, certain critics are inclined to admit that the Catholic conception of the Church is taught in the letters of S. Paul, and that the notion of a world-wide visible Kingdom of Christ on earth was certainly present to the Apostle's mind. But they set this doctrine also aside, as a theory derived from the world-wide imperialism of the Latin race.

According then to critics of this type, neither the Apostle's interpretation of Christ's death, nor of Christ's Person, nor of Christ's Church, can for a moment be trusted or accepted. The primitive leaders of Christian

thought borrowed one idea from the Hebrew, and that was wrong; another from the Greek, and that was wrong; another from the Latin, and that was also wrong. They seem to have had a perfect genius for being mistaken. They utilized all the three great languages available to them, and made a misleading use of each.

These examples show the extent of recent disparagement of the Apostolic interpretation. I do not say that English Modernists are agreed about these cases, but it is impossible to isolate Modernism into various nationalities. For Modernism is a critical tendency. While its conclusions are not everywhere the same, its method is the same. And there are conspicuous examples of English Modernists who agree with these conclusions, especially with regard to the doctrines of the Atonement, and the Person of Christ.

It must, of course, be fully recognized that the *difference* between the Teaching of Jesus and the Teaching of the Apostles is in various respects very considerable. This is the case with many doctrines and principles. There is, for example, unquestionably a very great difference between Jesus' Parable of the Prodigal Son and the Pauline doctrine of reconciliation by the Death of Christ. There is a great difference, again, between Christ's hints and suggestions about His relations with the Father and the doctrine of S. John concerning the Word becoming Flesh; or that of S. Paul concerning the pre-existent Son of God, who was the Father's instrument in the Creation.

The question therefore which we are compelled to face is this. Is the opinion of Apostolic inaccuracy correct? Did the primitive exponents of our Faith pervert the original Religion which Christ taught into a Religion very different and far inferior? Did they introduce extraneous ideas, in such a way as to alter the fundamental principles? No one can deny that

this is a serious question. It is certainly one of the most important problems of the day. It is disturbing a good many thoughtful men and women. If Churchmen take small interest in it, so much the worse for the Church's future. To neglect it would be to neglect one of the modern world's most pressing needs.

I

In the first place, then, it ought to be asked whether Religions do not follow a definite *law of development.* Their distinctive characteristic, that which makes them essentially what they are, is due to their own inherent genius, rather than to assimilation of foreign materials from without. While we must certainly allow a considerable element of alien ideas and of inner corruption, of deviation from the essentials which the Religion represents; yet surely it is true to say that the great historic Religions have, on the whole, maintained substantial identity in spite of their variations. At any rate, we may say that the presumption is that the actual historic development of a great Religion, in its fundamental principles, is a genuine product of the spirit of the Religion; and that the burden of proof must rest upon those who deny that this is so.

Take, for example, the Jewish religion. As it now exists, it is an ethical Monotheism. Its fundamental principles are that God is one and God is holy. Now the presumption is that this age-long development, this historic faith of Israel, is the genuine product of the genius of that Religion. We must recognize, indeed, remarkable deviations in Modern Judaism from its antecedents in some respects. We recognize that its priestly and sacrificial conceptions have disappeared. But this disappearance was caused by military supression of its ceremonial worship, and by exile, which

made continuance of the offering in the only lawful city impossible. It was caused by forces from without rather than by normal development within. We recognize also that many of its Modern controversialists deny that the doctrine of mediation forms any part of the Religion of Israel: which doctrine is nevertheless to Christians conspicuous in the Scriptures of the Jews. Indeed, that Modern Jews should reject a doctrine which their own sacred books contain; and that Christians should be instructing Jews about the actual contents of their own Scriptures; is one of the most singular features in the age-long controversy between the Synagogue and the Church. But here again, it seems certain that mediation was formerly a Jewish belief. And the modern Jewish departure from that belief may be traced to external influence rather than to the nature of the Jew's religion. It may be held that proximity to Christianity has created a controversial spirit. The principle of mediation obviously lends itself to Christian interests. For it paves the way to belief in the Mediation of Jesus Christ. And the Modern Jew definitely rejects the Mediation of Christ on the ground that no mediation whatever is required. To us it seems that controversy with Christians has made it difficult for a Jew to interpret with impartiality the contents of his own sacred Books. His explanations of instances of mediation in the Old Testament appear to us arbitrary and unnatural, and also totally inconsistent with his own belief in Intercession. He is unconsciously led to obscure an element in his own Religion. It is a common danger. Just as proximity to Catholicism has prejudiced Protestant interpretation of the Eucharist. Or as the Irish Ulsterman thinks he can never be so safe from Rome as when he is at the opposite extreme, or the Englishman confuses what is Roman with what is Catholic. Still, in spite of losses, and of contradictions in certain

respects, and of abnormal developments, the presumption yet holds good that the fundamental principles of the Jews' Religion, as it now exists, are the genuine outcome of the genius of that Religion. They are not reversals of its real nature; not contradictions to its essence. If anyone were to assert that Ethical Monotheism is not the original Religion of Israel, but that the original was of a totally different kind, has been suppressed, and another Religion established in its place, the assertion would be in the highest degree improbable, because there is such a thing as a law of development by which the great Religions maintained substantial identity. There is indeed one great doctrine which to many has seemed almost unknown in the primitive Jewish Faith, but yet emerged into definite distinction as the centuries advanced, and that is the doctrine of personal immortality. And yet it is true to say that this momentous doctrine was involved and implied in the relations between the Jew and the Deity. It came into clearness as the worshippers grew into consciousness of being made sharers of the permanence of the object of their worship. The doctrine was no departure from the original Faith. It was nothing more than its inevitable amplification. The Jewish conception of God's unity, of Atonement, of the functions of the Founder of their Religion, have never been reversed. They are to-day what they were in the time of the prophets. That great Religion has maintained its identity.

This law of development in the great historic Religions, this retention of substantial identity, applies to Christianity. It may be expected to be more conspicuously illustrated there than is Judaism, for Christianity is a definite revelation through one Personality, given once and for ever. And the interpretation of it with which we are concerned is that of its first adherents and original expositors. There are, there-

fore, exceptional reasons why the actual development should be ascribed to the genius of the religion.

The strong presumption is that the Religion of the Apostles is fundamentally the same as the Religion taught by Christ; that doctrines for which we have not the direct sanction of Christ, but have the direct sanction of His Apostles, are genuine inferences from the original data. The notion that the principles of Atonement, Incarnation, and the Church, taught by the Apostles as Christianity, are complete deviations from, and contradictions to, the mind of Christ, so that the genuine Religion of Jesus has been lost, and a totally false development substituted for it, from the first century down to the twentieth, is, even from the standpoint of the Philosophy of Religion, exceedingly improbable, because it is contrary to the law of religious development.

II

Secondly, there is the question of *presuppositions*. Modernism considers that the Apostolic interpretation of Christ was led astray because the interpreters were prejudiced by their presuppositions. They were obsessed by ideas which were foreign to Christ's mind: ideas derived from the Hebrew, and the Latin and the Greek. These ideas were incorporated into Christianity, employed to explain it, but entirely altered its character.

To this opinion I think we ought to reply that although it is quite true that to translate a religion into another language is to represent it in new terms which are liable to suggest other associations and other ideas, yet that liability is not confined to the Hebrew, and the Latin and the Greek. It is just as likely to happen when the languages are the English and the German and the French. The presuppositions of the modern mind are just as liable to pervert the Religion of Jesus

as the presuppositions of the ancient mind. The modern critic has no more security against misunderstanding Christ than Christ's contemporaries had. No one who compares together a number of books on the life of Christ issued in the last hundred years can fail to see how immensely the authors were influenced by their theories, sometimes rationalistic, sometimes philosophical, sometimes pantheistic, sometimes theological and religious, in their interpretation of Christ; [1] and often, it must be said, crippled and disabled by their own presuppositions from doing justice to the great elements of doctrine which the Gospels contain. These facts will force a critical mind to ask whether, after all, the Apostolic presuppositions may not be just as adequate for a true interpretation of Christ as those of any modern inquirer. What if, after all, the Hebrew and the Latin and the Greek provided the expressions without contradicting the substance of the new religion? What if that great language, the Greek, which is the finest instrument of human speech the world has ever known, was adapted to express the fundamental facts concerning Christ's personality?

But if the Apostolic interpretation is fundamentally mistaken owing to presuppositions, and to the alien theories which were unfortunately introduced, what security can we have that the Modernist interpretation is exempted from this fatal tendency of interpreters to go astray? No doubt the Modernist is free from the presuppositions which affected and determined the Apostolic view of Christ. But the Modernist is no more free from presuppositions than the Apostles were. The theories with which he approaches the facts concerning Christ are no doubt very different from those of the Apostles. But presuppositions he has, and must have, he cannot escape them. For

[1] E.g., Weinel, *Jesus in the Nineteenth Century*.

it is impossible that his mind should be a perfect blank. And what assurance is there that the Modernist ideas may not as hopelessly mislead in understanding Christ as, in his opinion, the Apostolic ideas misled the first interpreters? I see no reason why, if I cannot trust the Apostolic interpretation, I should be justified in trusting that of the Modernist.

III

In the third place, we ought to consider *the method which the historical critic pursues*. There is a very significant tendency in Modernism to throw discredit at once on any passage which suggests or implies a supernatural claim on the part of Christ. The line adopted is to say that the passage is not Christ's utterance; that it is a popular opinion among his adherents; it is a product of early Christian religiosity. It is accordingly set aside as the exaggerated language of uncritical admiration. For example, a critic of this order (Bousset) declares that the passage about David's Son and David's Lord is not an utterance of Christ but a theological theory of the first community. "Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed," is pronounced to be not historical. Again, the calling Christ "Lord, Lord," is a reference to the worship of the primitive community. "He that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven" has no meaning except in reference to the Church, and therefore presupposes the Church already to exist. Therefore Christ never said it. Similarly, "where two or three are gathered together in My name" is a statement obviously coined after Christian assemblies were in this way gathered together. Christ's answer to S. Peter at Cæsarea Philippi is also dismissed as created by the later community. All of these, and many more, are pronounced to be outcomes of theological reflection; of course, very interesting from an

antiquarian point of view, as showing what changes actually came over this remarkable Syrian movement, but of no value whatever from the point of view of truth.[1]

The reader of such criticisms may fairly observe that this systematic ruling out of every statement which implies something more than human in our Lord; ruling them out without the smallest documentary evidence, or critical proof; can only be due to the nature of the critic's method. It clearly involves certain assumptions with regard to Christ's personality.

Now I do not for a moment suggest that these criticisms by Bousset would be endorsed by English Modernists. They might be regarded as extravagances. But they are none the less applications of the critical method, which refuses to ascribe to the self-consciousness of Jesus anything which goes beyond the minimum meaning to which His utterances may be conceivably reduced. If they are regarded as extravagances, at any rate they show that the method is not without its dangers. They suggest how subjective and individualistic it may become.

Professor Loofs [2] says that the reason why historical critics arrive at negative conclusions as to Christ's Divinity is simply because they deal with a record on the principles of historical science. For historical science can only regard as credible that which can be explained from causes within the sphere of our human experience. Thus, the historical critic, investigating the Story of Jesus, starts with a presupposition that it was a purely human life, and that nothing happened in it which falls outside the sphere of human experience. To give up this presupposition would mean admitting that the life of Jesus, or this or that event in His life, is incommensurable for historical science. That is

[1] Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 1913.
[2] Loofs, *What is the Truth*, p. 83.

to say, historical science gives to the Gospel a naturalistic or rationalistic explanation. But, says Loofs, "if on the contrary, the life of Jesus cannot be understood as a purely human one, then historical science may give from its sources evidence to this or that of the doings or the sufferings or sayings of Jesus, but to do full justice to His life and His person is beyond its limits. The latter is my conviction." [1] Loofs contends that "nobody relying on the supposition that Jesus was a purely human being, is able to write a really historical life of Jesus." [2]

That means that historical criticism assumes, as its fundamental principle, that every character in history is strictly within the limits of the purely human. He is man and he is nothing more. That is the assumption on which criticism discusses Moses and Buddha and Mohammed and Confucius, and therefore also Jesus Christ. To this regulation historical criticism can permit no exception. Christ must be made to conform to it, like every other Founder of Religion.

But then clearly when we read its conclusions we must remember its self-imposed restrictions. It has limited itself to the Natural. It has ruled out everything which cannot be explained that way. Therefore, obviously the question is, whether historical criticism can be allowed the final decision on Christ's Divinity. If the Divine were literally to enter human history, historical criticism could not possibly explain Him, since it has expressly, on principle, ruled Him out. Either, therefore, the Deity must not come in, or else historical science must be pronounced inadequate to deal with Him, supposing Him to arrive.

Historical criticism has, of course, enormous value. To underrate its worth would be simple blindness. It would betray incapacity to appreciate the progress of

[1] P. 85. [2] P. 85.

modern methods of studying the past. The debt we owe to the critic is immense. Criticism has made it possible for us to understand the Apostolic Age as it was never understood before. The light which has been thrown on the human side of Christ's activities is wonderful.

But none the less, while we are deeply thankful for the gifts which the critical method has brought us, we can never forget its limitations. It is a method which cannot allow the personal entrance of Deity into human affairs. Historic criticism has no room for God Incarnate. But what if Incarnation were God's will? What if the Divine personality were determined to enter into the history of our race? What if, in spite of critical theories, He actually appeared? Well, then the brilliant resources of criticism would be concentrated on efforts to explain Him away. Or else to confess itself baffled by a phenomenon which surpassed its power to explain.

Now that is precisely the conflict which exists between the historical critic and the Apostolic interpretation. The primitive exponents declare that Christ existed originally in the form of God, and entered subsequently into the experience of man. Historical criticism, being on principle confined to what is human and what is on earth, cannot deal either with His existence outside the sphere of human history, nor with a notion of Divine personality taking the form of a man among men. These are conceptions with which historical criticism can have nothing to do. What else can criticism do but refuse to contemplate their reality? But religious speculation cannot rightfully allow these great conceptions to be dismissed. For we dare not deny beforehand, for the sake of a critical method, however valuable is its sphere, that such an entrance of the Deity into Humanity may possibly be God's will. When all the destructive action in the

world has done its utmost to reject the conception of God in the flesh, still at least the doubt will sometimes rise, what if, after all, in spite of all this negation, God actually did appear? That haunting doubt can never be laid to rest. When we are confronted with the primitive interpretation of Christ we are aware that this is certainly what the early Church believed. What then, if, after all, that interpretation should be true?

IV

In the fourth place we ought to study *Christ's method of teaching*. There are two different ways in which teaching may be given. One is to give definite, more or less systematic, instruction in the principles which the teacher desires to implant in the learner's mind. The other is to elicit by questioning what is in the learner's mind; to lead up, gradually, towards the conclusions desired; excluding misconceptions on the way; correcting erroneous ideas, and so inducing the learner to form conclusions for himself. The first method is the dogmatic: the second is the Socratic. The two are not of necessity mutually exclusive. The same teacher may at times make use of both.

A study of the Gospels makes it plain that our Lord preferred the second of these two ways. He liked to elicit by questioning, rather than to instruct by dogma. Whatever the reason for His choice of method, there can be no doubt about the fact.

He taught by suggestions and hints and parables, by dark or paradoxical sayings, rather than by sharply defined dogmatic affirmations.

When S. John the Baptist sent inquirers to Him with the question, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" the answer was given by implication and indirectly: not at all by a definite declaration. After the Baptist's disciples had gone

our Lord explained that the Baptist was the messenger preceding the Messiah. But still, that our Lord Himself was the Messiah was only suggested: it was not asserted. The people were left to draw their own conclusion. It was open to any critic to say, He has not told us plainly in so many words.

Again, when confronted with the challenge, "By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority?" [1] our Lord gave no direct reply whatever, He met that challenge by a counter question: "I also will ask you one question, which if ye tell me, I likewise will tell you . . ." And on their refusal to answer His question, He refused to answer theirs. And why did He refuse? Because "the answer was in the consciences of His questioners." [2] It is a serious danger to impart religious truth to the unprepared. Christ was frequently reticent, sometimes reduced to silence owing to the unpreparedness of His hearers. Nevertheless, if here He refused to give a full dogmatic answer, He went on to suggest by parable what the source of His authority really was. He told them how the owner of the Vineyard sent his servants to receive the fruits of his Vineyard, and, when they were ill treated, "afterwards sent unto them his Son, saying, They will reverence my Son." [3] Our Lord here solemnly indicated a peculiar relation between Himself and the God of Israel. But still, even then, the relationship is not dogmatically defined. For the term "Son" may be used in several senses. The language is open to a minimum interpretation. Christ hints at the truth, but will not attempt to force belief.

Nor was this method of teaching confined to the crowds. It was applied to the inner circle of the

[1] S. Matt. xxi. 23.
[2] Bp. Knox, *On What Authority?* p. 119.
[3] S. Matt. xxi. 37.

Twelve. Christ elicited by questioning the impression which they had gained about Him. "Whom do men say that I am? . . . But whom say *ye* that I am?" The great declaration is not made by Christ, but affirmed by the Apostle. Christ commended it when made, and acknowledged its truth. But it was not a dogmatic affirmation of Christ's self-consciousness. It was a conclusion of Apostolic faith.

And even in the Fourth Evangelist, where, more than in the other Gospels, dogmatic utterances of Christ are given, the Jews are represented as complaining about the reserve and indefiniteness of our Lord's method. In Solomon's porch the Jews "came round about Him, and said unto Him, How long dost Thou hold us in suspense? If Thou art the Christ, tell us plainly." [1]

Now all this method of teaching by questioning, and drawing forth the truth from the learner's own mind, shows that our Lord regarded spiritual realities as dangerous things if forced on the unprepared. It might easily do them far more harm than good to hear about these sublime conceptions before the time of receptiveness had come. Christ suggested this danger in the Parable of the Sower, when He referred to people who received ideas with joy, but had no root, and only endured for a while. Therefore there was a time to be silent as well as a time to speak. The truths of the Christian Revelation are not like propositions in mathematics, requiring nothing more than an intellectual assent. Christ clearly attached the smallest value to such acceptance. If personal relation to Him, as being what He is, involves moral conditions and self-surrender, the psychological moment must be awaited before the claims can be wisely made.

Now if this analysis of Christ's method of teaching is correct, it follows that it is impossible to consider

[1] S. John x. 24.

Christ as the complete exponent of the Christian Religion. For he who teaches by questioning, by drawing out ideas from the learner's mind, correcting error as he goes by showing the untenable nature or inadequacy of the learner's statements, is clearly training the learner to become the exponent of his principles. He who teaches by hints and suggestions and by implication rather than by direct dogmatic instruction, trusts himself and his principles to the mental capacity of his disciples. He who adopts the Socratic method must have a disciple by whom he is to be fully explained. It is therefore impossible to limit Christianity to doctrines for which we have the direct authority of Christ. Yet this is in effect what Modernism is doing. It assumes that we cannot be certain of the validity of ideas which exceed the letter of Christ's actual instructions.

This assumption might sound correct if Christ had been a systematic exponent of the Christian Religion, teaching by definite dogmatic utterances. But this, as we have seen, was not His method. In many respects it is exactly what He was not. Consequently the Modernist theory is based on a mistaken conception of Christ's method.

V

But the subject must be regarded from another point of view. *For Christ's Revelation was by His Character.*

The peculiarity of Christ among all Founders of Religion is in the fact that He embodied in His conduct what He taught. He was the living realization of His own ideals. That means that His teaching was not confined to His words but included His character. The supremely impressive fact about Christ is not simply what He said but what He was. Now revelation by

teaching ideas is one thing. Revelation by character is another. And the consequence of this fact, that Christ supremely declared Himself by His life and character, is that His utterances have to be explained in the light of His self-revelation. This self-revelation could not be finally appreciated until the career was past. For, obviously, so long as life remains unfinished, its remainder may refute all previous impressions of its worth. As S. James says, "we count them happy that endure."

It was not until the end had come that His self-revelation was complete.

Christ's conduct in the last sad days not only confirmed the past, but drew out into greater clearness than before the amazing perfectness of His Character. But this consistent embodiment of His own ideals to the bitter end must be testified by others. It could not be testified by Himself.

As a distinguished critic said years ago:

"It would be a great mistake . . . to suppose that the Revelation . . . was already perfected during the earthly appearing of Him Who brought its consummation, or that there is any one moment of His human life, or any single word or deed of His in which it is already perfected. . . . Not single words, were they the eternally truest, and not single deeds, answering exactly to the import of such true words, but only a finished history, embracing everything that is relevant to the subject, can give the complete Revelation. . . . For if an individual life can be rightly estimated, both in itself and in its connection with the rest of mankind, only when, being fully concluded, it becomes clear as a finished whole, how much more must this have been the case here,"[1] in the unparalleled life of Christ.

Since, therefore, the revelation of Christ is the self-revelation of a personality, its interpretation must be

[1] Ewald, *Revelation: its Nature and Record*, p. 119.

very largely left to others. The interpretation of Christ is far more than a report of His words, or a selected record of His actions, or an exposition of His Words. It is the experience of His personality. It is an interpretation of His character, His actual self.

VI

And this brings us to think of *Christ's interpreters* and their qualifications. Who and what Christ was, and held Himself to be, must be ascertained from the effect produced by Him upon the inner circle of the primitive believers.

Now it has been said that " all men alike are oblivious of the greater part and the deeper meaning of facts, and all alike make their own selection." [1] The self-same facts make a very widely different impression on different observers. To one they signify comparatively little ; to another a very great deal. The eye sees what it brings with it the power to see. And this principle applies to the interpretation of any facts. People are very differently qualified to be interpreters. Some are dull and slow and stupid : others are penetrating, acute, and singularly observant of details or hints which altogether escape the average attention. This difference separates people everywhere, and in every subject of human interest. It is seen in the students of science and in the students of history, and in the students of character. Some possess a remarkable capacity for understanding what facts represent. It amounts in certain people to positive genius. Such people are undoubtedly the few. Most of us require to be told and enlightened, to have things pointed out, to have explained to us by the men of insight, what is before our eyes, to see what the facts before us really mean, and what is the full range of their significance.

[1] Sir Henry Jones, *A Faith that Enquires*, 1922, p. 67.

They realize with the quickness of intuition. They hear what was not spoken but was intended: especially where, by sympathy, a spiritual affinity exists.

Renan remarks in one of his Essays: "Mankind has a narrow spirit; its judgments are always partial. The number of men capable of grasping the true analysis of things is imperceptible."[1]

The diversity of power to interpret is naturally more conspicuous the higher the range of facts to be interpreted. Nowhere will it be so conspicuous as in the sphere of spiritual facts. Above all, in the interpretation of Christ. For in the sphere of Religion we are admittedly at the highest level of facts.

Bourget says that the most indispensable qualification for an interpreter of religion is sympathy; and that to penetrate with supreme delicacy into the minds of believers of ancient days it is necessary to have experienced for oneself the meaning of faith, but also to retain the yearning and consequently the appreciation.[2]

Now the Apostolic interpretation of Christ has at least one advantage. It was the work of men who were themselves spiritual experts in a very remarkable degree. No one will dispute that title to S. Paul or to the Fourth Evangelist. Every one must admit that we must go far to find their equals in religious insight. If spiritual sympathy qualifies to explain religious facts and personality, these men possessed that qualification as few have ever done. No doubt in critical skill and learning the modern critic has accomplishments to which S. Paul and the Fourth Evangelist were strangers. But critics themselves will admit that neither critical acuteness nor massive learning has saved some of their gifted colleagues from the most extraordinary aberrations as interpreters to

[1] E. Renan, *Essais de Morale et de Critique*, p. 5.
[2] Bourget, *Célébrités Contemporaines*.

which the human mind is liable, and from an amazing incapacity to deal with religious facts. The truth is, that the interpretation of Christ requires other gifts besides critical acuteness and accumulated learning. And those indispensable gifts are precisely what the first interpreters possessed in an altogether exceptional degree.

The movement which a few years ago took for its watchword the expression "Back to Christ," intended to emphasize the superiority of Christ's own utterances to those of His disciples. It was well-intentioned and very popular. It sounds so reasonable to say that the subordinates must be eclipsed in the Master's presence. The Founder of the Religion knew what His adherents did not. Reverence and reason combine to support this view. To say that we can give no such regard to the utterances of a disciple as we can give to those of our Lord, commends itself to the religious instincts of those who hold the highest conception of His Person.

And yet, while it is unquestionably true that the utterances of Christ possess supreme authority; while S. Paul definitely contrasts his own conclusions and directions with those of Christ; it is also true that every attempt to limit Christianity to the Words of Jesus ignores the very nature of the Christian Revelation. It assumes Christ to be exactly what He is not: namely, a mere instructor of religious truth. Those who are convinced that Christ was more than a teacher, and more than a prophet, can hardly escape the conclusion that His importance to the human race does not consist only, or chiefly, in what He said, but in what He did and what He is.

The separate lines of study which we have considered: Christ's method of teaching, by eliciting what is in the teacher's mind; Christ's Revelation, being chiefly self-revelation through Character; Christ's interpreters,

being spiritual experts in a very remarkable degree, and that Christ deliberately left Himself to their interpretation: all these considerations combine to give immense authority to the words of the Apostles. It is therefore not in the least surprising to find that Christ is reported to have said, "He that heareth you heareth Me"; thereby directing Christians to supplement His own teaching by the teaching of the Apostles. Men can dispute whether Christ uttered that sentence or not. But they can hardly dispute that the whole situation gives great authority to the original interpreters.

The relation between Christ and His interpreters becomes even yet more plain when it is remembered that *Christ* distinctly *left Himself to their interpretation.*

It is obvious in the Gospels that He was acutely conscious of their limitations. He even catechized them about it, and reproached them for their lack of insight. "How is it that ye do not understand?" But while well aware of their defects He took no precautions to make Himself independent of their impressions. He wrote nothing. He dictated no letters. He drew up no account of His own main principles. He simply informed them that they were to be His witnesses.[1] And they went about saying that He has constituted them "His Witnesses unto the people."[2] The record is that they were expressly ordered by Christ Himself to go "and make disciples of all the nations."[3] They are His authorized exponents.

It appears then, from the evidence in the Gospels, that Jesus combines an acute consciousness of their limitations with a serene assurance that they will not fundamentally misrepresent Him.

[1] Acts i. 8. [2] Acts xiii. 31. [3] S. Matt. xxviii. 19.

VII

But there is a further reflection which as Christians we are compelled to make. Hitherto we have regarded the matter on its purely human side, without taking any account of *Divine intervention*, of Providential control over human affairs. But, as believers in God, we are surely bound to say that God is in History. If God was concerned in determining the time when Christ should appear, in protecting His frail infancy from the massacre of the innocents; in securing the growth of this Child to maturity, upon whose preservation so much depended; if Christ is the supreme Revelation of God to men; then God must surely be also concerned that this Revelation should be substantially preserved, in its fundamental principles at least, for the benefit of all subsequent generations. The difficulty with Modernism is this: It assures us that the genuine religion which Jesus taught has been obliterated by a religion concerning Jesus, which He never taught, and which is essentially different, and contrary to His teaching. Modernism declares that this alien Religion was substituted for the real Christianity by S. Paul and other teachers, forms the bulk of the contents of the New Testament, and has universally prevailed as the genuine thing down to the twentieth century and the rise of the Modernist rejection of it.

Now what it seems to me that the Modernists do not face is the seriousness of the consequences of their theory to any belief in God's interest in the preservation of Christian truth. If God has cared so little for Christ's Religion that He has permitted it to be replaced by a counterfeit during the entire historic course of its existence hitherto, I am totally unable to see why the human race should be expected to show more care about it than God has done. I am bound to say that the Modernist view, if accepted, would for me undermine

all belief in providential control of the religious development of mankind in general, and of Christianity in particular. I see no trace in Modernist writings of the gravity of the sceptical inference which their theory creates. But a theory which implies such careless indifference in Deity to the fate of the Revelation which everywhere assures us of His care that we shall know the truth, is involved in such strange and bewildering contradictions, as must lead the majority of its adherents far further than its advocates intend.

CHAPTER V

THE CHRISTOLOGY OF THE CHURCH

THE conclusion at which the Apostolic Age arrived was that while Jesus was Human, He was just as literally Divine. The Apostles repeatedly teach His pre-existence with the Father before His appearance on earth. It was no mere temporary pre-existence of one created some centuries, or so many thousands of years, before His entrance into human history. It was the eternal existence of One Who was literally God's equal and God's Son. That is clearly the teaching of the Fourth Evangelist. The Word was God. He was Eternal. And this eternal Word became flesh. That is unmistakably implied in the teaching of S. Paul when he speaks of our Lord as being in the form of God and appearing in the form of man. Now the form of man, no one can question this, means really and literally human. And correspondingly the form of God means really and literally divine. The one expresses what our Lord was originally, the other expresses what, at a definite point in history, He became. And this exchange of one condition for the other is the greatest act of condescension ever performed, and, consequently, the supremest illustration of humility. Again, S. Paul regards it as a manifestation of the grace of our Lord that He who "was rich, for our sakes became poor." That must mean that the same person who had by nature the riches of Heaven, out of love to

men and for the sake of their salvation, chose instead the poverty of the life on earth. Thus, being in that supremely exalted condition, He assumed a condition of lowliness and poverty.[1]

The whole purpose of the Nicene Declaration concerning Christ was to reaffirm the Church's belief in His Deity. This is obvious when we remember the circumstances under which it was formulated. Arianism had ascribed to Christ every honour and dignity consistent with creaturehood. It had assigned to Him a glory almost divine. It was prepared to acknowledge that He was supernatural, that He pre-existed, that He was not as one of the creatures. It was willing, nay anxious, to call Him anything and everything so long as it was permitted to refrain from calling Him God. It was anxious to approximate as close as possible to the Catholic Faith, always provided that it need not acknowledge Him literally Divine. But this it was impossible for the Church to accept. The Declaration of Faith at Nicæa insisted that Jesus Christ was very God, and of one substance with the Father.

This Nicene Declaration affirmed the reality alike of the Godhead and the Manhood in Christ. It affirmed that He was both. But it solved no problems how the Divine and the Human were related. It simply asserted the fact, and that was all. It rejected Arianism, simply in self-defence, because Arianism was destructive of that which the Church existed to proclaim. The function of the Church was to keep that which was entrusted to its charge. And that which was entrusted was the doctrine of the Incarnation. The Declaration of Nicæa was propounded in no speculative interest, but purely in the interest of Religion.

[1] 2 Cor. viii. 9; B. Weiss, *Bibl. Theol.* I. 145; cf. Dorner, *Person of Christ*, V. 441, Appendix, and Meyer.

I

But, granted that Christ was literally Divine as well as Human, as truly God as He was man, the active reasoning powers of men were soon at work to discover some explanation, how the Godhead and the Manhood were combined. It was inevitable that the intellect should be engaged on this most difficult task.

The first attempt to explain *began with the Godhead* of Christ. It said, hold firmly to the fact that Christ is truly Divine. His Deity is perfect and complete. Deity is the central fact of His Being. Whatever else He is, He is assuredly GOD. Then what is to be said of the Manhood of Christ? Here was the difficulty. How could the Manhood be united to the Godhead so as to be in reality but one? In reply it was suggested that the Manhood of Christ did not consist of body and soul, but of body alone. In Christ the ordinary human mind was replaced by the Divine mind of the Son of God. Interpreted in this way we can see that Christ is one.

This effort to explain the Incarnation was very earnest and sincere: (1) it held firmly to the literal Divinity of Christ, and thus secured the integrity of His Godhead. It also (2) secured the unity of His Person. It therefore accepted the foundations of the Church's faith so far as the Deity of Christ was concerned. Herein lay its excellence. But its imperfection was that it could only allow so much to the Manhood as seemed consistent with the unity of the Person. Thus the Manhood was essentially incomplete. For it consisted of a body and not of a soul. Hence the criticism was inevitable that if Christ assumed a human body but not a human soul, He was not truly man. How then could He redeem what He did not assume?

While, therefore, the author of this explanation was greatly respected, the Church was entirely unable to accept his view.

II

Intellectual inquiry began again and made a second attempt to explain the Incarnation. This time it *began with the Humanity of Christ.* Christ it was said is thoroughly and completely Man. He has a human body and a human soul. His humanity is perfect. His personality is human.

Then what about His Godhead? His Godhead is perfect as well. But there cannot be, so said these new explainers, a *physical union* between His Manhood and His Godhead. Such union would produce confusion. Either it would absorb and destroy the humanity, or else it would degrade the Deity. There can only be a *moral union* between the Manhood and the Godhead in Christ. The Word of God, so this theory taught, has morally united with the Man Jesus. God selected Christ for this purpose, and the reason why God selected Mary's Son was because He knew that Christ would prove worthy of the selection. Thus the union of God and Christ is a sort of divine indwelling. There is community of purpose between them. Christ and God are united in will.

Now the advantage of this explanation lay in its preserving the integrity of the Godhead and of the Manhood in Christ. But its serious disadvantage was that it involved the coexistence of two distinct persons, the Son of God and the Son of Mary. These two persons were considered as brought into close connection and morally united. But, nevertheless, they were two, and they could not really be one. Hence, while this theory maintained the distinction of the two natures in Christ, it entirely destroyed the unity

of the Person. What took place, according to this theory, was the adoption of a human person by the Deity and not the Incarnation of a divine person at all. In that case there was the exaltation of a man but not the humiliation of the Divine. But this contradicts the Apostolic teaching, "He was rich and for our sakes became poor." That cannot be true, if what really happened was the endowment of a human person with exceptional graces and honour. And this is one of the objections which the Catholic teachers made against the theory.

If it was impossible for the Church to endorse the former explanation, it was still more impossible for the Church to endorse the second.

If we look back on these two attempts to explain Christ's Person, it was self-evident that neither of them had really explained the doctrine of Incarnation at all. What both of them have done is to substitute another doctrine in its place. Both of them no doubt retain some portion of the original doctrine, but both of them also lost essential parts of it. If the Church was to retain its self-identity, and preserve the substance of what it had hitherto believed, it could not acquiesce in either. It was of necessity forced to reject them both.

III

When the Church found it necessary, after these controversies respecting the relation between the Godhead and the Manhood in Christ, to supplement the decree of Nicæa with another of Chalcedon, the latter declared our Lord to be perfect in Deity and perfect in humanity, truly God and truly man, manifested in two natures, the distinction of natures being by no means abolished by the union, but rather the

property of each preserved and continued into one Person. It is obvious here that all that was done is to state the doctrine of the duality of the nature of Christ, and the unity of the Person, that Person being divine. But no attempt whatever is made to give any explanation, metaphysical or otherwise. The Church simply guarded the Doctrine of Christ's Deity against opposite attempts to speculate on the method of the Incarnation. The Church rejected the theory which made the Manhood imperfect. It rejected also the theory which made the Godhead something merely set in juxtaposition to the Manhood, and so destroyed the Lord's divinity. It protected the doctrine of Christ's divine Personality, but made no effort to give a philosophical explanation.

This declaration, that in Christ there are two natures and one person, and that this Person is literally Divine, has been, of course, the Church's historic traditional way of stating the essence of the Christian faith concerning our Lord.

It would be difficult to find a clearer account of the Church's Doctrine of the Incarnation than the famous passage in our great Anglican theologian, Richard Hooker. There were four points which the Church was compelled to maintain. First, that Jesus was Divine. Secondly, that He was human. Thirdly, that He was both united; and fourthly, that the two were not confused and merged into something neither human nor divine. The Church, in order to make its meaning clear, adopted the distinction between Nature and Person. In Christ the natures were two, the Person was one, and that Person was Divine. The human nature of Christ had no human personality of its own. The Son of God adopted manhood, though not a man. There are not two Persons in Christ. The Son of God is not one person and the Son of Mary another. "The Son of God did not assume a man's person unto His

own." He took "the very first original element of our nature, before it had come to have any personal human subsistence." [1]

IV

The Church's declaration of Faith concerning Christ as God incarnate prevailed right down the centuries. No doubt it was often criticized, but chiefly from without. But a new era may fairly be said to have arrived in the critical activity of the nineteenth century. That century was conspicuous for awakened interest in the intellectual problem presented by the Person of Christ. The difficulties involved in the doctrine of two natures in one Person were felt to an unprecedented degree. The declaration of the Church, that Christ was truly God and truly man, that the properties of each nature were combined in one Person, which Person was literally Divine, was, especially in Germany, subjected to a criticism more rigorous and extensive, perhaps, than ever before. It was asked, How can the same Person be simultaneously Divine and yet Human, possessing the properties of both natures.

If the Person of Christ is Divine, then He must be at the same time ignorant of many things because He is man, and knowing all things because He is God. And for the same reason, limited in power and yet Almighty. Once more the reasoner asks, How can these things be possible? And further than this, it is asserted that the distinction between nature and person belongs to an obsolete phase of thought, and that the idea that the Manhood of Jesus had no human personality is to the modern mind unthinkable.

These difficulties, which are undoubtedly very real, have been acutely and widely felt. Nowhere has the traditional belief been more strongly contested than

[1] Hooker, V. lii. 3.

by the German mind. A critic who has the amplest opportunities to know assures us that "there is hardly a single learned theologian, I know of none in Germany, who defends the orthodox Christology in its unaltered form." [1]

V

In order to meet the difficulties felt by modern minds another statement has been attempted. Instead of regarding the Incarnation as the union of two natures in one person, it is held that what took place was a *self-limitation of Deity*. That is to say, that the Divine Person of the Son of God actually laid aside His attributes of omniscience and almighty power, and reduced Himself to the limits of a human person.

This theory of the self-limitation of the Son of God is supported by the language of S. Paul in Philippians ii., where he teaches our Lord laid aside the mode of divine existence and entered upon a human mode of existence. "He ceased to exercise, at least in a certain sphere, and so far as human thought can attain, some natural prerogatives of the divine existence." [2] This does not mean that the functions of the Son in the Godhead and in the Universe were suspended by the Incarnation. "We must suppose that in some manner the . . . self-limitation of the incarnate state was compatible with the continued exercise of divine and cosmic functions in another sphere." [3] Thus the Incarnation is no mere addition of a manhood to his Godhead. It is God divesting Himself within the human race of some of the powers of the Godhead. [4] He is represented as laying His divine knowledge aside and reducing Himself to the limits of a knowledge possible for man. The Personality of Jesus is thus

[1] Loofs, *What is the Truth*, p. 184.
[2] Gore, *Dissertations*, p. 90.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 93. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

literally Divine. Yet it is God within the consciousness of man. It is progressive human consciousness and it gradually comes into knowledge of its relations to the Father, as Eternal Son.

This idea of the self-limitation of Deity, God imposing restrictions upon Himself, has much to commend it. It is the principle upon which God has acted universally. For it is involved in the *Creation of the World*. In giving existence to the material universe God may be said to have limited Himself to act in special ways to the exclusion of others. Then, further, the principle of self-limitation is still more conspicuously displayed in the *creation of man*, for that means the bringing into existence of independent wills; wills other than His own, capable of resisting Him as well as of doing Him service.

If, then, the Incarnation is the supreme example of Divine self-restriction, this is in keeping with the whole course of the Divine procedure with regard to His creatures. This explanation of the Incarnation as the self-limiting of Deity has also in its favour the fact that it is founded on the orthodox and Apostolic belief that the personality in Jesus is Divine. It fully declares and protects the Deity of our Lord, just as the traditional explanation of the two natures and one person does. It is, therefore, essentially and in principle, what the traditional doctrine is: namely, a recognition of the perfect Deity of Christ. It is identical with the historic belief, as far as concerns the fact, which fact it attempts to explain.

This theory, that the Son of God laid aside certain attributes, in the sphere of His human experience, while retaining them alike in the Godhead and in the universe at large, met both with approval and with opposition. It met with approval because it appeared to offer relief from difficulties presented by the traditional explanation. It met with opposition because

it differed from the explanation which had hitherto prevailed. Both the approval and the opposition were natural. It may be said to have encountered more opposition than it deserved, seeing that it retains the fundamental principles of the idea of Incarnation. It is, of course, a restatement of the faith. But it is what many restatements are not. It reaffirms the same fact of Deity made flesh.

One writer in the *Cambridge Report of Modern Churchmen* says : " If we are to work with the orthodox theory of the Incarnation, I am sure we can only do so by making use of the conception of Kenosis to the full extent." [1] The same writer acknowledges that he accepted this explanation in a book which he published in 1918 on the Faith of the Apostles' Creed. Now, however, he says, " I do not think it can be a permanently satisfying solution of the problem." [2] He is now sure that " it is not to any theory of depotentiation of God that we can look to give us the conditions under which we can explain Jesus as both human and Divine." [3] In his previous book the writer had said that the limitations of the Divine Son of God " expresses a doctrine necessary to the scientific theologian." [4] That was in 1918, but in 1921 it was maintained that this doctrine, so far from being necessary to the scientific theologian, presents no permanently satisfying solution of the problem.

The writer says further that the doctrine of the self-limitation of His power and his consciousness imposed by the Eternal Son in the Incarnation " is undoubtedly exposed to many of the objections brought against *Kenotic* theories, such as are marshalled in massive array in A. B. Bruce's book, *The Humiliation of Christ.*" [5] But he does not mention what those objections are.

[1] *Report*, p. 291. [2] P. 292. [3] P. 292.
[4] Bethune-Baker, *Faith of the Apostles' Creed*, p. 12.
[5] *Report*, p. 291.

He says they are massive, but he does not attempt to show that any one of them is conclusive. And it ought not to be left unnoticed that Professor Bruce distinctly declines to assert that no theory of divine self-restriction can be true. He writes:

"Is this so-called Kenosis metaphysically possible? Can the Almighty God depotentiate Himself? . . . For my part I do not care to ask such questions; I am not inclined to dogmatize on what is possible or impossible for God; I think it best to keep the mind clear of too decided prepossessions on such matters. It appears to me not very safe to indulge in *a priori* reasonings from divine attributes, and specially from divine unchangeableness. It is wiser in those who believe in revelation to be ready to believe that God can do anything that is not incompatible with His moral nature, to refuse to allow metaphysical difficulties to stand as insuperable obstacles in the way of His gracious purposes, and so far to agree with the advocates of the kenosis as to hold that He can descend and empty Himself to the extent love requires." [1]

If weight is to be attached to the objections which Bruce is said to have marshalled in massive array, weight also is to be attached to the distinct proviso which he himself has added to them. For that proviso completely alters the significance of the objections. More especially since Bruce expressly said:

"We may indeed enter on the study of this new theory with a suspicion that it will turn out a failure, yea, with a rooted conviction that all theories whatsoever will break down; only believing firmly that Christ is both God and Man, and determined that no theologian, orthodox or heterodox, old or new, shall rob us of our faith in either of the factors which constitute our Lord's mysterious person, and using our critical faculties mainly to protect ourselves against such a result." [2]

[1] Bruce, *Humiliation of Christ*, p. 171.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 170.

VI

We now come to the *Modernist explanation* of Christ. Whereas the former explanation starts with the Godhead, and accepts the doctrine that Christ's personality is Divine, the Modernist begins with the Humanity, determines that *the personality in Christ is human*, and dismisses the doctrine that His personality is that of the Eternal Son.

The Modernist line of thought appears to be that "there is not a vast gulf between the Divine Nature and the Human Nature."[1] What is the Divinest thing in God? Not so much His Nature as His Character. It is His goodness and His love. Thus we are to look for the Divinity of Christ not in the metaphysical but in the moral: not in any substance or nature but in character. In Christ, says the Modernist, the personality was human but the character was Divine. The relation of God to Christ was that the former imparted to the latter the Divine goodness to such a degree that the Humanity became perfect. Hence "Perfect Humanity is Deity under human conditions." In other words, Christ is the perfect representative of God so far as that is possible in humanity. Thus the uniqueness of Christ's character is accounted for by the indwelling of God in a human personality.

Now in this explanation of our Lord there are clearly two persons concerned. There is the person of God and the person of Christ. And Christ's uniqueness is the result of the Divine power on the human person. There was a divine influence exerted on Jesus by way of suggestion or inspiration.

This theory has been submitted to a very able and searching criticism by Dr. Tennant,[2] to which, so far

[1] *Report*, p. 196.
[2] *Constructive Quarterly*, Sept. 1920, p. 468.

as I know, Modernism has not replied. The Divine indwelling in Christ is represented as the influence of God on a man. Now this influence is not conceived as overpowering the human faculties, or reducing the man to a mere machine. On the contrary, it respects the human independence. Consequently, the effect of this Divine influence on Christ depended on the Man's capacity to be influenced. That is, on His moral and religious state. The Divine indwelling must depend on human receptiveness: whether the Man opposes obstacles to the Divine influence or does not. Now it is required and acknowledged by the Modernist theory that Christ was sinless; that He set no hindrance to the complete Divine indwelling; that He submitted His will invariably to the will of God. But the question is, What caused this unique receptiveness? Why was there no self-will in His human personality? On what grounds did the Divine person select Jesus of Nazareth out of the millions to be the medium for His complete self-revelation to Humanity? What is it that qualified the Son of Mary to be a reflection of the purely Divine in a way which no other human person has ever been?

Clearly either Jesus Christ must have been by nature like other men, or else He was unlike them. Consider both alternatives.

1. Was Jesus by nature different from all other men? Was this human person a man whose singularity consisted in complete exemption from all those evil tendencies and inherited predispositions to perversity, which beset and perplex and compromise all ordinary mortal men? Was He the natural high-water mark of the previous development of humanity? Were all the excellencies of Israel, and none of its infirmities, concentrated and focussed in Him? Was He the supreme example of heredity, its incomparable

glory and crown? Was He by nature attracted to every heavenly influence and averted from all else?

If Mary's Son was naturally all this, then of course we can understand why the Divine influence did such wonderful things in a human personality so perfectly amenable, responsive, and submissive to its suggestions. But we are left confronted with a superhuman figure. For this sinless heart, this self-identity with the all holy will of God is absolutely unique. No explanation has yet been given why this human personality escaped all moral imperfections: invariably refused the evil and chose the good. If the human person Jesus was by nature different from all other men, He is, as such, an unexplained, perhaps an inexplicable mystery.

2. If, on the contrary, the human person Jesus was by nature much the same as other men, not naturally better than they, if the Divine indwelling began in His infancy before consciousness was awakened, so that the Man owed His sinless glory and religious intensity to this power of God at work within Him, previously to the very dawn of intellectual life and moral responsibility, then there are also serious problems which arise and demand an explanation.

Why is it, asks Dr. Tennant, that the indwelling of God in Christ produced results so different in degree from the results of His indwelling in any other man? For the moral elevation of Christ is admittedly unique. So great is the difference in degree that it forces us to ask is not this a difference in kind? If the difference between Christ and Christians is only due to the different degree of intensity of the divine influence directed upon them, why is not the same intensity poured out on every other man? If we are all susceptible to the same high influence, why is not the same high

influence bestowed upon us? If the Divine influence on Jesus left His human freedom unimpaired, respected His personal independence, and yet made Him perfect, cannot the same all-powerful influence leave our freedom equally unrestrained, and yet do as much in every member of the human race as it did in Christ? As Dr. Tennant puts it, "the world would still be a theatre for the free development of *finite* moral personality, yet what a different world it would actually be! The bulk of human misery might have been saved, with no derogation from the inalienable and God-given rights of human personality." [1]

To this we may add that God will not even do for all other men at the end of the process of their development what He has done for the Man Jesus. For a development through sin and failure into repentance and discipleship is not the same, and cannot mature into the same, as a development which matured without sin or failure, and consistently maintained the high level of invariable perfection.

A further objection to the Modernist theory of Christ, as being no more than a God-inspired man, is its complete inability to do justice to the Apostolic interpretation of our Lord's Person. It has no real use for the idea of a literal pre-existence. It would never dream of expressing itself in such terms as the prelude to S. John. It reduces to something bordering on unreality such language as "He was rich and for our sake became poor." It sees no appropriateness in the Pauline appeal to the condescension to the Son of God as the supreme example of humility. It is compelled to forced and unnatural expositions of Apostolic expressions.

Consider the familiar Johannine utterance, "God

[1] *Constructive Quarterly*, Sept. 1920, p. 473.

so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." Is it, after all (on the humanitarian theory), the supremest illustration of God's love that He poured His Spirit in overflowing measure into a human person who invariably did His will? Or is it not reasonable to say that the forbearance of God and His inexhaustible patience with a man who has almost invariably opposed His will is even a greater demonstration of love than God's relation to Mary's Son? I put this out as a question to be considered. I think I could understand if anyone were to say that, on the humanitarian theory, the Apostolic language is exaggerated and fanciful, and in reality simply cannot be justified. I could understand if anyone were to say that the Johannine language carries no conviction with it, because it does not represent the Modernist idea.

VII

The Modernist conception of Christ dispenses entirely with the Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation. Indeed, it is presented to the present century as a superior construction, on the ground that the orthodox doctrine of Incarnation is full of difficulties. An inspired man is *a vastly simpler and more credible idea* than an incarnate God. Now certainly the idea of a purely human being under the influence of special grace is incomparably easier to understand than the idea of a being who, while perfect man, is at the same time perfect God. It is quite true that the doctrine of Incarnation presents difficulties which have never yet been solved, and may even be for men insoluble. But, at the same time, it must be remembered: (1) That Incarnation, being in its very nature unique, is bound to present great difficulties, because there is strictly nothing which can be rightly called an adequate

comparison; (2) That the existence of insuperable difficulties in a doctrine is perfectly consistent with its being true; (3) That simplification of ideas does not always produce greater resemblance to reality. Hooker's warning is still worthy to be remembered, that there are some things more true than plain, whereas our tendency is to make them more plain than true.

It is obvious, of course, that the Church's Declaration concerning Christ was formulated in the terminology of the period to which it belonged. That was, and always must be, the necessity for any dogmatic expression. We may, therefore, distinguish between the *form* and the *substance* of the Declaration. The terminology of one age may be less intelligible in another. The philosophic theories of the fifth century may differ considerably from those of the twentieth. Such terms as Nature and Person may cease to discharge their explanatory functions in a later time as successfully as they did in an earlier. This, at any rate, may be contended. Whether it is actually the case or not, whether any other terms can satisfactorily replace them, is another matter. But while it is conceivable that the *form* in which the faith is best expressed may well be changed, what is not conceivable is that the *substance* of the faith itself may disappear. The substance which the terminology was intended to protect must be perpetuated. Otherwise, it is not the form only which is altered but the essential contents of the Religion itself. What, then, is the essence of the whole idea of the Church concerning Christ? What is it that the Church existed to declare and defend? The essential idea is not that a human person was heightened in character with perpetual continuity and invariable identity with God's will. It is that Deity Himself experienced life under human conditions. Whatever difficulties this doctrine sug-

gests, whatever perplexities it may involve to modern thought, that, and nothing else, is the central conception which the Church has proclaimed. Therefore no restatement can be tolerated by the Church in which this foundation principle disappears.

And, further, we must contend that it is perfectly reasonable to believe in a *fact* while acknowledging our inability to explain the *method*. Our human limitations compel us to do this every day. Take the most obvious example: Our human constitution is composed of matter and spirit, body and personality. That these two apparent incompatibilities are united we know. But how they are united we know not. Where precisely the Self actually is; how that which can neither be weighed nor measured is blended with that which can be both; how that which is essentially extension is blended with that which is incapable of extension: it is impossible for us to explain. My incapacity to explain myself is a fact which should make me cautious before denying that there may be facts in God's greatest revelation which also I am unequal to explain. It is quite reasonable to believe in a thing as true while unable to give a self-consistent explanation.

If the Incarnation involves unfathomable mysteries, it shares the characteristic with all ultimate realities. Writers on Theism are never weary of insisting that Deity transcends all human power to comprehend. In which case it is natural to infer that His actions will involve problems which are incomprehensible.

Moreover, the Incarnation brings with it in its train conceptions so illuminating and sublime, throws such light on God and man, and their mutual relations and the destiny of the race, that there are reasons and reasons why it should be true because it is too priceless to be false.

Nor are the difficulties presented by the Incarnation measurable with the difficulties presented by the personality of the Infinite.

Advocates of the Modernist explanation of Christ's Person will probably admit that their own theories are by no means exempt from difficulties of a very serious character. They may be prepared to own that a really adequate Christology can never be reached. "Possibly," says a writer in the Girton Conference Report,[1] "the solution of such questions lies beyond the range of human intellect." If that be so, we may well be content to accept the fact although unable to explain; and believe in the literal Incarnation of Deity, although we cannot solve its mysteries. We may reasonably believe that God can do what men cannot comprehend. We may think that the conception of God's character and capabilities involved in the doctrine of the Deity of Christ is too glorious to be dismissed merely because the method of Incarnation transcends our powers. We may justly take it as an axiom that a religion with mysteries may be true but a religion without mysteries must be false. The Deity of Christ, like the nature of God, may well be accepted as a fact, while we do not pretend to solve the problem how those facts can be.

I cannot escape the reflection that if the doctrine of the literal Incarnation of God is rejected by some men on the ground of the difficulties thereby presented to the human mind, the doctrine of the personality of God may also be rejected by other men for similar and stronger reasons. I am bound to say that the difficulties presented by Incarnation sink into relative insignificance compared with those presented by the personality of Deity. If I have accepted the latter in spite of a baffling sense of utter incompetence to

[1] *Report*, p. 199.

solve its enigmas, I could not consistently reject the former, whose difficulties are immeasurably less, and where reality gives the strongest support to my belief in a personal God.

CHAPTER VI

SOME GERMAN ESSAYS IN CHRISTOLOGY

AN instructive treatment of the problems of Christology will be found in Professor Loofs' *What is the Truth about Jesus Christ?*: a volume of lectures which was translated into English in 1913 and is therefore easily accessible. Loofs is convinced that the life of Jesus cannot be understood as a purely human one, and that "nobody relying on the supposition that Jesus was a purely human being is able to write a really historical life of Him."[1] Loofs is certain that the presupposition of a purely human life of Jesus forces literary criticism to assertions with regard to the sources which can only be regarded as mistakes of learned sagacity.[2]

What is manifest in the Gospel is, according to Loofs, "a self-consciousness surpassing human measure."[3] "With majestic authority He opposes His *I say unto you* to the commandments of the Old Testament . . . and He knows that the position taken up towards Him is decisive to all eternity: *Whosoever shall deny me before men*, He says, *him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*[4] Hence the enormity of the stupendous demand, *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me*"[5] (S. Matthew xi. 27), proves that Jesus was conscious of a unique relation to God.[6] In all the Gospels Jesus calls God *your* Father and *my* Father, but never *our* Father. "For the Lord's Prayer

[1] P. 85. [2] P. 105. [3] P. 138.
[4] P. 139. [5] P. 140. [6] P. 143.

is not a prayer which He prayed Himself, but a prayer which He taught His disciples." [1]

This problem, then, of a self-consciousness surpassing human measure requires to be accounted for. Now Loofs considers the ancient Christology of the Catholic Church to be untenable. It possesses, in his opinion, difficulties of its own and leaves much unexplained. So the orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation is set aside. But then much goes with it. For example, the pre-existence of Christ disappears. Now " it is a view of vital importance to orthodoxy that the historical Jesus is the pre-existent *Son of God*. Do we find anything about this in the New Testament? Certainly, many New Testament passages assert the pre-existence of Christ; that is, they assert or assume, that Jesus did not begin to exist when His earthly life began." [2] But this doctrine is regarded as inadmissible if the personality of Jesus is purely human.

Well then, having set the traditional Christology aside, what alternative is there to produce? Loofs reiterates that " the self-consciousness of Jesus breaks the frame of a purely human life, and the experience of believers in all the Christian centuries confirms the assumption that the disciples of Jesus were right in seeing more in Him than a mere man." [3]

Is there any alternative explanation which can replace the discarded orthodox doctrine of Christ's Person? Loofs turns to the Kenotic theory, which explains the facts as a self-limitation of the eternal Son of God; so that the personality in Christ is literally divine within human restrictions. Loofs appreciates the value of this idea. " In this way people thought they could do justice both to the really human life of Jesus, and to the superhuman self-consciousness which is revealed by not a few of His words." [4]

This theory, however, Loofs is unable to accept.

[1] P. 144. [2] P. 177. [3] P. 201. [4] P. 224.

What then remains? Loofs' reply is most significant. It is a mystery. That is his "last refuge." It is all that can be said. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."[1] That is the mystery. But if we ask, How could Jesus do this? "we must answer, we can never penetrate so deep as to learn how God made Him what He was." Accordingly, Loofs' final sentence is simply to quote the words "he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame"[2] (Romans ix. 33).

This conclusion is instructive. Loofs is certain that the self-consciousness of Jesus surpasses human measure. He is dissatisfied with the orthodox explanation. He feels compelled to reject the Incarnation of the Eternal Son. But he is dissatisfied with any other explanation. The Modernist theory of a Man under the control of the Spirit does not really, in his opinion, account for the facts. He leaves the problem unsolved. Perhaps it is insoluble. There is no explanation given. All that is to be done is to believe in Jesus. "He that believeth on Him shall not be put to shame." But believe in Him as what? That is the question. And that question is not answered.

Another German professor attempts to supply an explanation of the mystery which Loofs leaves thus unsolved. Reinhold Seeberg's lectures, given in the University of Berlin, on the Fundamental Truths of the Christian Religion, have also been translated into English. Seeberg sees that the self-consciousness of Jesus combines two extraordinarily different aspects. Jesus felt Himself to be at the same time the Lord of the World, and yet the humble servant of the Lord of the World.[3] Those who believed in Him, saw in Him at once the Man of sorrows and of humility and, nevertheless, felt His sovereignty as that of Him Who penetrates and guides all things.[4]

That is the paradox. Can it be accounted for?

[1] P. 240. [2] P. 241. [3] P. 209. [4] P. 210.

Seeberg recognizes the greatness of the doctrine which accounts for it by distinctions in the Deity, and says that Christ is God working in a genuine human life. But Seeberg rejects the Trinity and also with it the Incarnation. They are to him incomprehensible. He maintains that the personality in Jesus is human. But this cannot account for the facts. Seeberg is perfectly well aware of it. The question is, What is the relation of God to Jesus? Seeberg is anxious to ascribe all divinity he can to Jesus, for only by so doing can he hope to explain the paradox: the lowliest of men claiming the Lordship of the World. Seeberg holds a Unitarian doctrine of Deity. He cannot, therefore, ascribe Divinity to Christ. But he suggests that while the personality of Jesus was purely human, the activity of the will of God created the Man Jesus to be its peculiar and unique organ and instrument. The Divine will, says Seeberg, "united itself with the man Jesus from the first moment of His existence; it acted upon Him, and permeated His feeling, thought and will. Thus the man Jesus became the Son of God." [1]

It is not Incarnation of a Divine Self. It is simply a Divine Self acting on a human self. There was no pre-existence of Jesus prior to His human birth, but the action of the Divine will was influential in Christ in a manner altogether unique.

"God was operative in the man Jesus in such a way that all the thoughts and emotions of His soul, His aspiration and will, always assented to and carried out the God-will that dwelt in Him, and determined Him." [2]

"The Divine Person entered so into Jesus as to become *one* spiritual, personal life with Him. He worked in the human life of Jesus, not from outside inwards, not by leaps and bounds, and interruptedly as in us, but from inside

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[1] P. 222. [2] P. 223.

outwards, revealing Himself in Him, and giving His thoughts, words, and actions their content and goal. All that the man Jesus thought and did was given and worked by God, who was one with Him. Nay more, He could not look upon His thoughts otherwise than as God's thoughts; He could not will without the consciousness that God willed. His personal life was for Himself the life of God. . . . To prevent theological misunderstanding, it may be mentioned here, that Jesus felt Himself, in His personal completeness, including the God-will which had become His will, as another, a second in relation to the Father. His Divine personal will, or His Divine personality, was for His own consciousness the eternal son of the Father in heaven. He was not a prophet endowed by God, according to His self-consciousness, but God, as the Father and with the Father." [1]

It will be admitted that Seeberg's conception of Christ is most remarkable. He has indeed the most exalted idea of Jesus compatible with denial of the Trinity and the Incarnation. But it is impossible not to feel that in his effort to account for Christ's consciousness of Lordship over the World, Seeberg has produced a figure which is not really human at all. The Jesus which Seeberg represents as being nothing more than a human person is yet represented as conscious of Himself as God. He is not a prophet endowed by the Father. He was for His own consciousness the eternal Son of the Father. He is God as the Father and with the Father. But all this unquestionably transcends the limits of what is conceivably human. No human person can lose his own personality in this way in the personality of another. The human is in this way overwhelmed by the Deity and reduced to little more than a machine. Jesus can only legitimately regard Himself as the eternal Son, if there are eternal distinctions in the Deity, and if the

[1] Pp. 224, 225.

doctrine of the Incarnation is true. Unless these doctrines are facts, Seeberg's conception of Jesus cannot be justified.

And yet Seeberg is perfectly correct in what he says of the paradox of Christ's self-consciousness. It *is* true that Christ combines unrivalled lowliness with unrivalled sense of Lordship over the World. The Divine and the Human in Christ is the eternal perplexity of the critic. But it is not to be solved on the assumption that His personality was nothing more than that of a man.

The theory presented to us here confuses the limits of Divine and Human personality. The theory is that God adopted Christ and came into the most intimate conceivable union with Him. But no human person could imagine himself so identified with the Divine person as to conceive himself as God with the Father, and as the Eternal Son in Heaven. God is God and man is man. The two can be united but not confused. S. Paul represents the true relation when he says: "I, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." The human person is profoundly conscious of the intimate influence of the Divine person upon him. But the two remain distinct. There is not the smallest tendency in S. Paul to regard himself as the Eternal Son in Heaven.

What is obvious from these theories is that to postulate a human personality for Jesus Christ no more gets rid of difficulties than to postulate a Divine personality. Dorner warned us of this years ago. It is perfectly true, as Dorner maintained, that if you attempt to explain the fact of Christ by ascribing to Him a human personality, the Divine in Him is reduced to a precarious and supplementary position, while the human is that which is complete. Jesus so conceived is simply human. He is not really Divine. His innermost Self in that case is man.

But Seeberg is clear that we cannot ignore the Apostolic interpretation of Christ's Person.

"Christ continues to exist in the sphere of divine glory, and is co-ordinated with the Father and the Spirit as the Son. These thoughts are not later dogmas, but belong to primitive Christianity. The formula, Father, Son and Spirit, which runs both clearly and in more hidden notes through the whole New Testament, may with moral certainty be traced back to Christ Himself. And I cannot help thinking that in this formula the conception 'Son of God' had another and deeper significance than in the usual application. But this leads to a further thought: it seems as if the Divine Person of Christ, too, must be thought of somehow as another alongside the Father and different from Him." [1]

That is a very remarkable account. The religious insight is clear. It prompts the question whether the critic must not be compelled to return to the traditional interpretation of Christ's Person. But here the writer shrinks. He is apprehensive that the facts which he realizes to be the primitive belief are incompatible with the Unitarian view. He is afraid of what he calls "establishing a heavenly family," "an unchristian polytheism." He does unintentional injustice to the doctrine of distinctions within the Deity, but he certainly shows none the less the conclusions towards which the Apostolic belief would tend, if it were allowed to have its way: the conclusions indeed which it actually reached in the Creed of the Church.

[1] P. 232.

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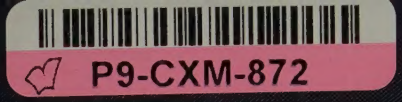
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